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EDITORIAL

DOWN THE MEMORY HOLE

One of the eerier stories to come out of the Gulf War was about a group of Vietnamese guest workers caught in Iraq during the early days of the "air war." They had gone all the way from Haiphong to Basra only to watch American B-52s once again shatter their lives. If they hadn't been interviewed by a *Los Angeles Times* reporter, we would know nothing about their surreal experience.

Too much of the Gulf War has disappeared down the memory hole. The bitter realities of life after wartime in Baghdad and Kurdistan, described in this issue by Selma Al-Radi and Joost R. Hiltermann, go largely unremarked in the daily press. The new rules of media engagement, analyzed here by Tom Engelhardt and Jacqueline E. Sharkey, are taking shape without public input or scrutiny. War crimes, a subject raised by Middle East Watch in its report "Needless Deaths in the Gulf War" and by Ramsey Clark's inquiry for the International War Crimes Tribunal, get more attention abroad than they do here.

The Defense Department's official history of the war, released in April, manages in 1,300 pages to say little or nothing about the West's role in arming Saddam Hussein, the curious encouragement given Saddam by U.S. diplomats from Ambassador April Glaspie on up or the failure to explore ending the occupation of Kuwait through diplomacy. No accounting is made of the civilian and military death toll. Nor is there any examination of U.S. encouragement of uprisings by Iraq's Kurds and Shiites—or the consequences of abandoning these peoples.

A year ago Kurt Vonnegut said, "The atmosphere in this country since the Persian Gulf War is like that at a party in a beautiful home, with everybody being polite and bubbly. And there is this stink coming from somewhere, getting worse all the time, and nobody wants to be the first to mention it." The stink seems even worse today.

DEFENSE BOMB
Robert L. Borosage

MEDIA'S WAR
Jacqueline E. Sharkey

KURDS AND IRAQIS TODAY
Joost R. Hiltermann
Selma Al-Radi

'MOTHER JONES' IN W. VA.
Andy Yale

DOWNSIDE USA
Robert Heilbroner

THE YELLOW PERIL'S BACK!
Karl Taro Greenfeld

PENTAGON-MEDIA PRESENTS

THE GULF WAR AS TOTAL TELEVISION

TOM ENGELHARDT

Here we've just cruised past the first anniversary of the bombing of Iraq—Gulf-War-plus-one (plus)—and the packs of Desert Storm bubblegum cards are long gone from newsstand counters. The war to re-establish war, American-style, seems to have vaporized even before Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf (retired) could get his memoirs into print. All that's left here of that twenty-four-hours-a-day, eye-burning, blood-pumping, high-tech, all-channel media event are self-satisfied military men and resentful journalists, both acting as if the initial bombing run on Baghdad had had CNN's outpost at the Al-Rashid Hotel as its target. But those who now claim that the media were the "losers" in the Gulf War, that censorship, press pools and military handlers galore represented an epic Bush Administration triumph over reportorial independence, still can't see the screen for the pixels.

What we viewed last year was less the death of independent media than the birth of "total television," a new co-production process to which normal labels of media critique and complaint largely don't apply. The Gulf War can, in fact, be seen as the ur-production of the new media conglomerate. For it, the war proved promising exactly because the boundaries between military action and media event broke down in such a way that military planning could become a new form of media reality.

Total television can be seen to have its antecedents neither in traditional war reportage nor in American war mythology. It was not even the child of Vietnam, which was not (as is so often said) our first television

(*Continued on Page 630*)

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LETTERS.

PLASTIC URGERY

Templeton, Calif.

As a longtime *Nation* subscriber but also a plastic surgeon, I was disappointed that Katha Pollitt bought the farm in her biased, slanted article about breast implants ["Truth and Consequences," March 16].

Silicone is one of the world's ubiquitous compounds, found in Di-Gel, baby powder and hair spray. It is used to coat I.V. tubing and needles. We have always known that small amounts of silicone leaked out of the envelopes, and occasionally an implant would rupture, but we are not talking toxic substance here. There is no scientific evidence that silicone causes lupus or any other disorder. There is hardly a plastic surgeon who has not recommended these implants for family or close friends. "Hero" David Kessler overrode his own advisory panel in recommending a moratorium, thus removing the controversy from science and placing it in politics, based only on his own personal opinion. Breast implant surgery has a 93 percent satisfaction rate, and the other 7 percent have very few serious problems. Women who have these operations do so for themselves, not to please men. We try not to operate on anyone who is doing it for someone else or who has poor self-esteem. The general rule is that a woman who likes herself but wants larger breasts is a normal patient who will in most cases have a happy result.

The Nation, priding itself on daring to print the truth, should be careful before putting such a deceptive editorial on the front page.

James C. Carey Jr., M.D.

SCAR TISSUE

Santa Fe, N. M.

Katha Pollitt's editorial reminds us of multiple factors that victimize women. Silicone gel breast implants are mostly implanted by conscienceless plastic surgeons who justify what they do with a diagnosis of "micromastia." I am yet to be convinced of the existence of such a diagnostic entity and of its specificity and sensitivity (there is certainly no clinical or pathologic diagnosis like "microglutea" or "micropenia").

Over ten years ago, as a pathology resident in a major academic medical center in Northern California, I received as a specimen for pathologic examination and diagnosis two intact cloudy spheres of gelatinous material that had been implanted a year earlier in the breasts of a patient. Accompanying these spheres was some surrounding fibrous connective tissue. After fixation, sectioning, staining and microscopic examination, I diagnosed the tissue as severe fibrous scarring with multinucleated foreign-body-giant-cell reaction. I had never seen (nor have seen again) such a degree of scarring, and I still keep a copy of the microscope slide as the best example of foreign body scarring and inflammation I have come upon. No one reacted to my alarm that implants might be causing such a severe reaction in patients, and I do not know what the surgeon thought or did upon receiving the diagnosis. I tend to believe many more cases must have been observed before the present "risks" were recognized. I intended to write the case up for publication but was dissuaded from doing so on the basis of the subject "not being interesting or significant enough."

Women have had to pay for the economic and human costs of a "cure" for a "disease" they did not have, as well as for the side effects of such "treatments." *Jorge H.-Aigla, M.D.*

JOE CAMEL'S BRAIN ON DRUGS

Bronx, N.Y.

Bravo for Cynthia Cotts's insightful article on the Partnership for a Drug Free America ["Hard Sell in the Drug War," March 9]. It's wonderful that a vast media campaign for a "drug free" nation sponsored by its leading manufacturers of pharmaceuticals, tobacco and alcohol got caught out by an independent journalist.

The Partnership works to suppress one group of drugs, responsible for 2,000 to 3,000 deaths per year, while its own products account for at least 300,000 deaths. These licit drugs are among the most addictive and by far the most prevalent mood-altering substances in use, especially among young Americans. So it is doubly ironic to consider the Partnership's strong emphasis on youth alongside the Old Joe Camel icon and the perpetual Bud beach party—both part of a successful effort to capture youth markets and establish product loyalty as early as possible.

Although the use of illicit drugs has declined since the late 1970s, more than 30 percent of high school seniors now regularly drink five or more drinks in succession, and a third smoke a pack a day or more. But then the Partnership's efforts are not aimed exclusively at youth—few teenagers see the full-page ads in *The New York Times* or the TV spots on CNN. The real targets of this campaign are parents.

Millions of youngsters are arrested and jailed each year for drug offenses because prohibition and criminalization lie at the heart of U.S. drug policy. This discredited strategy draws scarce resources from effective prevention and drug treatment and continues to poison the discourse on our real drug problems—poverty, unemployment and shattered communities. The Partnership's demonization of drugs and stigmatization of drug users perpetuate our bankrupt and deeply immoral approach.

Ernest Drucker, director
Epidemiology/Social Medicine
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

WEIRD SCIENCE

Washington

In her fine analysis of the Partnership for a Drug Free America, Cynthia Cotts left one stone unturned: the issue of government funding of Partnership projects. The Gordon S. Black corporation has shown that a pro bono effort for the Partnership can lead to lucrative government contracts. This Rochester-based market research firm conducted its first three Partnership Attitude Tracking Surveys (PATS) from 1987 to 1990 to gauge the impact of P.D.F.A. advertising on illegal drug use. Cotts correctly notes that such research is probably not very useful, considering its reliance on shopping mall interviews and its pretense that advertising can directly change behavior.

But try telling that to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which has approved $3.7 million in federal grants to the Black corporation to continue the PATS and similar research. This ultimately pointless project is being supported at the expense of useful and urgent drug research.

Of course, it is obvious why Black gets federal dollars: Its research supports basic "drug war" premises. Americans should just say no to mixing bad science and drug war politics.

Dave Fratello
Drug Policy Foundation

KEEPING ATTICA ALIVE

New York City

Bruce Jackson's "Judgment Day on the Attica Case" [Feb. 17] gave well-deserved exposure to a case that has too little claimed the attention of the media. The struggle to bring the Attica case to trial has been accomplished in the face of staggering adversity, as Jackson says. His article leaves unnamed, however, the people who have labored for two decades to give voice to those the state would leave unheard.

Elizabeth Fink and Dan Meyers of New York City, Michael Deutsch of Chicago, Dennis Cunningham of San Francisco and Joe Heath of Syracuse deserve recognition. They are not merely lawyers of competence; they are lawyers of tenacity and commitment. Equally deserving of recognition are Akil Al-Jundi and Frank (Big Black) Smith, both of New York City, and Herbert Blyden of Buffalo. These men—prisoners at Attica during that fateful period in 1971 and themselves members of the plaintiff class—worked year in and year out to keep the case alive and moving in order that our society be forced to confront the brutality of which it is capable.

Mary Boresz Pike

CORRECTION

In "Balkan Brew" by Anthony Borden (April 27), reference was made to U.S. recognition of *Serbia*. This should have read *Slovenia*.

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Letters may be edited for reasons of space.

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EDITORIALS.

Necromania

Eastertime is as good a season as any for a ritual public execution. The fact that a presidential campaign is also in progress makes it doubly appropriate. More than an administration of justice, the gassing of Robert Harris in California seemed designed as a national catharsis and a display of power. Nobody mentions deterrence anymore; the death penalty is about social control of a far more pervasive kind. It is a reaffirmation of the state's franchise on terror, its totalitarian dominance and its license to treat the lives of humans in the way that vengeful deities trifled with their subjects. After such a spasm of official bloodletting, people are impressed with their own powerlessness: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport."

As Americans feel their sense of control slipping away, their cries for more state murders grow louder. It makes perfect sense that the movement of consciousness against the death penalty slowed and stopped in the middle of the 1960s and has been racing in reverse ever since. Insurgencies, ethnic

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and sexual struggles, imperial defeat and the extraordinary persistence of violence in everyday life have created a post-civilized society in which quite cultivated people are given to the most barbaric sentiments. A nation that can rejoice over the slaughter of tens of thousands of Iraqis on the highway out of Kuwait City last year is hardly going to be upset about snuffing one—or 300—inmates on California's death row.

There is a connection between the form of state terror called war, and that which is known as the death penalty. Both are antithetical to democracy, for they deny the essential autonomy of the individual and deliver total power to the executioner, whether it's a faceless hangman or Governor Pete Wilson or a bearish general or President Bush. Both politicians and military men love death (unless they're moral radicals, like Mario Cuomo or Jerry Brown) because they can use it to exercise authority without regard to democratic scruples. Bill Clinton flew home to Arkansas on the eve of the New Hampshire primary to oversee the now-famous execution, by lethal injection, of a brain-damaged black convict. It gave him the opportunity to exploit that knot of hatred and anger in the American soul, the one that makes approval ratings rise ten or twenty points in the polls. The model, of course, was George Bush's somewhat grander invasions of Panama and Iraq, which gave the voters more deaths than they knew they wanted, with commensurate ratings hikes.

Those who oppose the death penalty in America must realize that it will be in use for the foreseeable future, and increasingly employed by many liberal and conservative politicians alike for their own ends (of the six leading Democratic candidates for President at the beginning of the year, only two—Brown and Harkin—opposed the death penalty in all cases). The Supreme Court is hopeless on the subject well into the next century. The eleventh-hour dissents of Justices Harry Blackmun and John Paul Stevens in the Harris case were passionate and compelling, but two out of nine is not a promising division of the Court. And those particular two are old and ailing.

It is grotesque that the self-described "world's leading democracy" is also the world's leading imprisoner of its people and the world's leading executioner of its wrongdoers. Although the political institutions are solid (rigid, some would say), civic society is so weak that it relies on a vast system of punishment and cruelty to keep the peace. The death of Robert Harris, while perhaps a small event in the sweep of horrors seen in recent history, is nonetheless a token of America's failure to produce a good society, much less a great one.

Mugged Again

The country has once again been mugged in the halls of Congress. On March 31 the House of Representatives voted 238 to 187 against transferring even a nickel from the military to domestic programs. On April 9 the Senate voted to support the President's military budget, limiting any chances for reasonable defense savings this year. The result of the votes will be cuts in domestic programs in the midst of a recession.

This is shameful folly. The historic opportunity posed by the end of the cold war is slowly being squandered. In the 1990 budget agreement, as the Berlin wall fell and the Warsaw Pact disintegrated, Congress and the President agreed to prohibit any investment of defense savings at home for three years. This year, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as Russia slashes military purchases by 80 percent, Congress and the President are about to limit any new military cuts to a bare 3 percent. Under current plans, at the end of the decade the United States will still be spending more on the military in real dollars than Richard Nixon thought necessary in the 1970s, when the Russian bear was supposedly on the prowl.

The failure to change our priorities costs us dearly at home and abroad. At home, investments vital to the prospects of the country are not made. The White House's budget—essentially endorsed by the Senate—would put about $120 billion into defending Europe next year against a threat that even the President agrees no longer exists. That is more money than the federal government will spend on educating our children; *and* cleaning up our environment; *and* rebuilding roads, bridges and sewers; *and* providing the nutrition and Head Start programs that help kids come to school ready to learn; *and* aiding research and development in health, energy, the environment and all other civilian areas combined.

Recently one hundred economists, including five Nobel laureates, wrote Congress warning that the lack of domestic public investment would contribute to the continued decline of the economy and exacerbate the recession. Reductions in military spending over the past eighteen months have accounted for about one-third of the drop in industrial production. With no investment program to provide new jobs and no serious conversion program in place, workers are being laid off with no place to go.

Abroad, the Administration has virtually abandoned any systematic effort to refashion a global order. The President pleads poverty—"no blank check"—when faced with the needs of the new age: aid for the catastrophe now facing Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, support for an expanded United Nations, debt relief and environmental investment in the Third World.

Contrast this with the end of World War II. Military spending was reduced by 90 percent in three years. More than 21 million Americans transferred from wartime to peacetime employment. The G.I. Bill helped millions with stipends for education and training, and loans for houses. Corporate and community planning begun at the height of the war eased the "reconversion" of defense plants. Transformation at home was accompanied by an aggressive role abroad—the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were created; the Marshall Plan was launched.

The United States is no longer the sole economic power; military spending is not nearly as big a portion of the economy. But the opportunity—indeed the necessity—for dramatic changes is similar.

At the root of the failure is an absence of leadership. The Administration, tired and befuddled by the post-cold war world, begs each day to be put out of its misery. Republicans in Congress follow the President in lockstep on these issues,

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and Congressional Democrats have chosen partisan maneuver over national leadership. When Congress convened, the House leadership twisted arms to pass an election-year tax bill they knew the President would veto. When it came time to bring down the walls between defense and domestic spending, conservative Democrats bolted. They were damned if they would be tagged as "tax and spend" Democrats. Their votes insured that any defense savings would go to deficit reduction.

The mainstream press hasn't helped much. These votes—surely among the most important issues Congress will address this year—were barely noted in the press. *The New York Times* reported the House action on page nineteen. *The Washington Post* noted the Senate vote on page ten. While the legislators huddle in panic to explain their check stubs, no one expresses much concern about the political price to be paid for the abject and historic failure to redirect this country at the end of the cold war.

After World War II, Truman initially wanted to maintain a large military in garrisons around the world. Congress probably would have gone along, but it was buried under a deluge of baby shoes, sent in by mothers demanding that absent fathers be brought home. If we are ever to reap any benefit from the end of the cold war, there must be a similar independent mobilization, with citizens calling their representatives to their senses.

ROBERT L. BOROSAGE

Robert L. Borosage, political director of the Campaign for New Priorities, is a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.

The Media's War

In the wake of protests over press restrictions during the Gulf War, the Pentagon and major media representatives last year began negotiations on guidelines for coverage of future conflicts. A draft agreement, reached in mid-March, is being hailed as a step forward in the relationship between the military and the media. However, it cannot guarantee that the press will be able to provide comprehensive, objective reporting of future wars.

Although the agreement is based on the concept of open and independent coverage, it is vague and provides no way for the media to compel the Pentagon to abide by its provisions. *Newsday* reporter Patrick Sloyan said in an interview that the document is "total bullshit." Sloyan recently won a Pulitzer Prize, primarily for stories he wrote about the Gulf War *after* the conflict, when he had more access to military personnel and information.

The proposed agreement is supported by Washington bureau chiefs, professional associations like the American Society of Newspaper Editors and high-level executives from electronic and print media.

The document is designed to prevent the Pentagon from controlling the media as it did in the gulf, where journalists were confined to "pools" led by Armed Forces personnel and had limited access to the battlefield. Military officers reviewed pool reports before releasing them and sometimes altered or delayed stories for reasons unrelated to security. America's most-decorated living soldier, retired Army Col. David Hackworth, who covered the conflict for *Newsweek*, called the restrictions a form of "thought control" designed to influence public opinion by providing a "sanitized" and "distorted" picture of the war.

The proposed agreement states that pools should be used only in specific circumstances, such as the opening hours of a conflict; that military and public affairs officers should not interfere with the reporting process; and that the Pentagon will allow news organizations to operate their own communications systems in the field, with limited restrictions.

One serious flaw in the agreement is that no consensus was reached about security reviews. Media negotiators said reviews of news stories prior to release were "unnecessary and unwarranted" in light of the media's excellent record of observing military security without prior review during conflicts such as the Vietnam War. Pentagon personnel insisted that security reviews insure that news material does not violate ground rules that protect military secrecy and U.S. troops. Under the proposed agreement, reporters who violate such ground rules could have their combat credentials suspended and could be expelled from the battle zone.

Another flaw is that the Pentagon has a history of violating agreements about media coverage. Following protests about Defense Department restrictions during the invasions of Grenada and Panama—when journalists were prevented from covering much of the fighting—department officials agreed to implement recommendations regarding wartime reporting. These recommendations, contained in reports written at the department's request, were to insure that future restrictions were based only on considerations of operational security and troop safety. But during Operation Desert Storm, former Pentagon officials and military officers—including several who had helped formulate the recommendations after Grenada and Panama—told the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee that the Gulf War restrictions went beyond what was needed to protect military security.

Despite clear evidence that the Pentagon has not operated in good faith in the past, supporters of the proposed agreement say the document will help the press because it establishes specific principles for the coverage of wars and is backed

(*Continued on Page 633*)

★

Presidential Purity Test

Which White House hopeful's never golfed
At clubs completely Anglo-Saxon?
I thought this day would never come:
At last, we're drafting Jesse Jackson.

Calvin Trillin

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In Michael Frayn's novel *The Tin Men*, media consultants go around asking members of the public what kind of news they would like to read in their papers. Would they like more airline crash stories, or fewer? If they would desire more, would they wish to read about children's toys found in the wreckage, or not? And so on. There is something touching, as well as something stupid, in the desperate effort to discover and predict the public taste. The recent defeat of the British Labor Party was an instance more of the stupid than the pathetic, and it may have implications for all of us who despise postmodern politics and postmodern journalism.

In the past the Labor leadership always had an explanation for the mauling it suffered at the hands of the Tories. It was invariably because there were too many people like me in the party, people who gave a scrofulous and Trotskyist appearance to what would otherwise be recognized as a perfectly decent and respectable social-democratic racket. If it wasn't the association with supposed middle-class rabble, then it was the ghastly embarrassment of having to associate with all those greedy trade unions, combinations of working stiffs who had *no idea* of the slothful and acquisitive image they presented.

Neither of those two explanations—both faithfully transmitted in the exiguous coverage of the British election that was mounted in *The New York Times* and the other guardians—will wash anymore. Under the leadership of Neil Kinnock, Laborism took the Frayn route to its logical conclusion. Tell us what you want, it wheedled the voters, and we will agree to stand for it. Here are our principles, and if you don't like them, we'll change them. Labor tried everything—*everything*—to please. And, like the obedient servants of consensus that they are, the opinion polls reported that it was working. Why wouldn't they report such mindless disinformation? After all, Labor was doing what the opinion polls had said it must do. On that calculus, Labor jolly well *deserved* a spell in power and a taste of the fruits of office. Kinnock and his crowd had shown that they had earned it.

As everybody now knows, the eventual "swing" to Kinnockism was on the statistical order that is represented in the suggestive term "margin of error." And what does a party do when it has tried everything—*everything*—and nothing works? It will take a long time to erase the spectacle of Neil Kinnock's ignoble resignation speech, in which he sourly blamed the influence of the very Tory tabloid rags whose favor he had courted these many years. Better still was the sight of the bloated face of Kinnock's deputy Roy Hattersley (a man so depraved that he had changed his mind on the Salman Rushdie case in order to ingratiate himself with Pakistani voters in his own constituency) as on election night he came before the cameras and wailed: "I just don't *understand* it." I was less inclined to jeer at my former comrades of the *New Statesman*, who, apparently believing that the polls had made an election unnecessary, committed the hubris of printing a premature victory issue.

If Neil Kinnock had won, I know personally of more than one Washington pundit who had his *Zeitgeist* column already written: "The triumph of a reformed, streamlined, neoliberal Labor Party is a happy omen for Bill Clinton's New Frontier style . . ." (fill in as applicable from existing boilerplate stocks). My own prerecorded appearance on a PBS television show, in which I had said that the Tories would be back with almost no trouble, was snipped before transmission because "the smart money" just didn't buy it and "the numbers" didn't bear me out.

Why all this consensual concern for the fate of a mediocre careerist like Kinnock? I haven't yet absolutely established this with William Safire, but I believe it to be true from my own observation that the word "electability" entered the political discourse as part of Kinnock's exciting, renovating, nonideological, thrusting New Frontier (draw down further boilerplate stocks) campaign for a new "image." Thus, a lot of dumb money as well as some smart stuff was riding on his putative path to power. Here is why it didn't work.

Apart from disowning scruffy leftists and trade unionists, Neil Kinnock had also to disown his personal commitment to abolish Britain's nuclear missile capacity. This commitment had been so intense (we would now say "defining") that he had once, and with typical exaggeration and sentimentality, said that if he ever wavered on the Bomb he hoped his wife would leave him "and take the kids." Well, he wavered on the Bomb all right and the little woman stayed by him, as political wives tend to do. (She's worth ten of him, by the way.)

What is the result? The electorate knows that you would change your mind on one of your cherished principles, and also change your mind on a crucial matter of defense and national security, because the opinion polls told you it was advantageous. Here is one of those unquantifiable things that opinion polls cannot measure. Can anybody *imagine* the Conservatives changing their position on nuclear weapons for anything like the same reason? The Tories believe that the so-called "independent British deterrent" is the special symbol of their potency as a party and the survival of Great Britain as a postimperial nation. They would not hesitate to lose an election rather than alter this preposterous and dangerous view.

So, as the real poll drew near, Labor had advertised, via its eagerness to please, that it was unserious about a serious question. Let all future Tin Men beware. The road from "credibility" to "electability" lies through plausibility, and people don't like you if all you want of them is to be liked. Now that it has ended in humiliation and utter disappointment, the authors of the disaster are already saying that all it proves is the need for "new ideas" and "new leadership" from the very same stable. At least I can't be blamed for the next debacle. Meanwhile, in this country the Democratic Leadership Council is hoping that it has found a Teflon candidate with the skills of an Atwater, which says something about the generals who fight the last war and then blame the foot soldiers when they screw up.

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Gold Diggers of 1992

EDWARD SOREL

Let's salute the guys in the military who are trying to keep the war business alive. In the former Soviet Union, Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov sought to avoid cuts in the military by declaring, "Since the Commonwealth of Independent States has no enemies, it will defend itself against everyone." The U.S. Joint Chiefs have conjured up seven war scenarios to prove their budget can't be cut. Even the little guys don't want the money to stop. Nicaraguan Defense Minister Humberto Ortega, who held the post under the Sandinistas, flew to Washington recently to curry favor with the Pentagon. He presented Lieut. Col. Dennis Quinn with the Camilo Ortega medal, the Sandinistas' highest award for valor. Colonel Quinn was an adviser to the *contras*, who killed 30,000 Nicaraguans during the late civil war.

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ARTICLES.

IRAQI KURDS

Still Pawns in The Great Game

JOOST R. HILTERMANN

In a line stretching some fifty kilometers from the northern Iraqi town of Dohuk past Zakho across the bridge over the Khabur River and up to the gates of the Turkish customs station, trucks await their turn, carrying Iraqi gasoline that in Turkey may fetch sixty times its Baghdad price. My two companions and I, along with a Kurdish guide, wind our way around this caravan, which has turned the southern approach to the border into a messy traffic jam. It is 4 A.M. on this icy cold, late December day. Like a thunderclap, a Kurdish *peshmerga* (guerrilla—literally, "one who gives himself") walking next to our car suddenly empties his automatic weapon into the air in a vain attempt to force a wayward truck back in line. Our guide rolls down his window to bark a question at the man, who turns around and glares at us. "What do you expect me to do," he says, offended, "without traffic lights?"

The absence of traffic lights may be the least of the Kurds' concerns. Their unprecedented military and administrative control over Iraq's northern provinces has presented them with a much more formidable challenge, one that some Kurdish leaders now say they wish they had never accepted. "It is ironic," Kak Omer Mustafa, an elderly judge and senior official in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (P.U.K.), explained to us. "Usually people clamor for freedom. Well, the Kurds are free now. And now we are clamoring for the government to come back!"

Last October, seven months after the defeat of the Kurdish uprising, Saddam Hussein's army unilaterally withdrew from the northern provinces and imposed an economic blockade on the area while cutting off the salaries of civil servants who refused to "relocate" to the south. Under cover of American, French and British fighter planes, the Kurds have managed their own affairs ever since, rebuilding villages destroyed by the Iraqi regime, administering justice and paying civil servants from levies on the Iraqi contraband the Turks drive across the border.

But the army's withdrawal put the Kurdish leadership on the spot. Their de facto control over the area has forced the Kurds to decide whether they wish to remain under Iraqi sovereignty (with perhaps some form of self-rule) or exercise their right to self-determination and secede—with the help of foreign powers. Kurdish leaders, fully cognizant of the odds, were quick to respond: The "revolutionary courts" that had been established in areas liberated from Iraqi control following the 1991 spring uprising were abolished, and Iraqi law and courts were reasserted. "We never wanted to secede from Iraq," Kak Omer explained. "The outside world does not want the Kurds to secede . . . and we do not wish to be blamed internationally for creating an atmosphere of secession." (Kak Omer has since passed away.) On May 17 the Kurds are scheduled to hold assembly elections, which have been postponed several times so far this spring. Their hope is that a majority will win sufficient support to formulate a unified strategy vis-à-vis the Baath regime in Baghdad. The central questions are, Should they declare a federation, negotiate the modalities of an autonomy arrangement with Saddam or perhaps wait for a different government to come to power in Baghdad?

'Kurdistan is a Godot society. We are always waiting.'

The Kurds have not had much room to maneuver. The embargo of Iraq, which came on top of United Nations sanctions, has started to take its toll on the population, thousands of whom live in tents or other makeshift shelters and had to endure severe shortages of food and kerosene in what turned out to be the harshest winter in a quarter-century. Saddam's forces continue shelling Kurdish positions along a frontline the regime has arbitrarily drawn across the map of northern Iraq. And allied resolve to offer continued protection to the Kurds may prove just as fickle as President Bush's decision to intervene last spring. The future of these Kurdish lands therefore remains precarious.

The Kurds' current plight exemplifies the Kurdish condition in the twentieth century. Divided over five countries, and frustrated in their nationalist aims in each of them, the Kurds have historically reached out for an external savior, much like the helpless and distraught wife of Bluebeard, who, sitting in the family castle, never stopped scanning the plains for a princely deliverance. Iraqi Kurdish groups have entered into alliances with Iran, Syria, Israel and the United States over the past two decades.

The outside powers have not been moved by humanitarian concerns, though; their primary motive has been to keep the regime in Baghdad off-balance. Offering logistical support to Kurdish fighters was no more than a means to their own ends. The consequences for the Kurds have been disastrous. A military alliance with the Pahlavi regime against Baghdad in 1974 lasted exactly one year—that is, until the Shah made a more profitable deal with the Iraqis and the Kurds became a nuisance. Estimates put the number of killed and wounded during the following year of fighting at 50,000, and the number of displaced at 600,000. In 1987 the newly created Iraqi Kurdistan Front forged a fresh alliance with Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran, which had been fighting a costly war with Iraq

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for more than six years. The Kurdish move was considered high treason in Baghdad and prompted a murderous campaign of chemical attacks against villages and mass killings and deportations of civilians (the so-called "Anfal" operations), the full extent of which has only recently started coming to light [see Aryeh Neier, "Watching Rights," March 16].

In the spring of 1991, as the Kurds teetered at the abyss of total destruction, lo and behold, there came blazing over the horizon some very large armies that dropped food packages on the good guys and laser-guided bombs on the bad. It was hard to say no to this. Responding to confusing signals of possible support from a U.S. President who had his own agenda with regard to the Iraqi regime, the Kurds rose once again. This time the cruel results were witnessed by television viewers across the globe. The limited military intervention that was prompted by the ensuing popular outcry has now added a tricky variable to an already complex equation in northern Iraq.

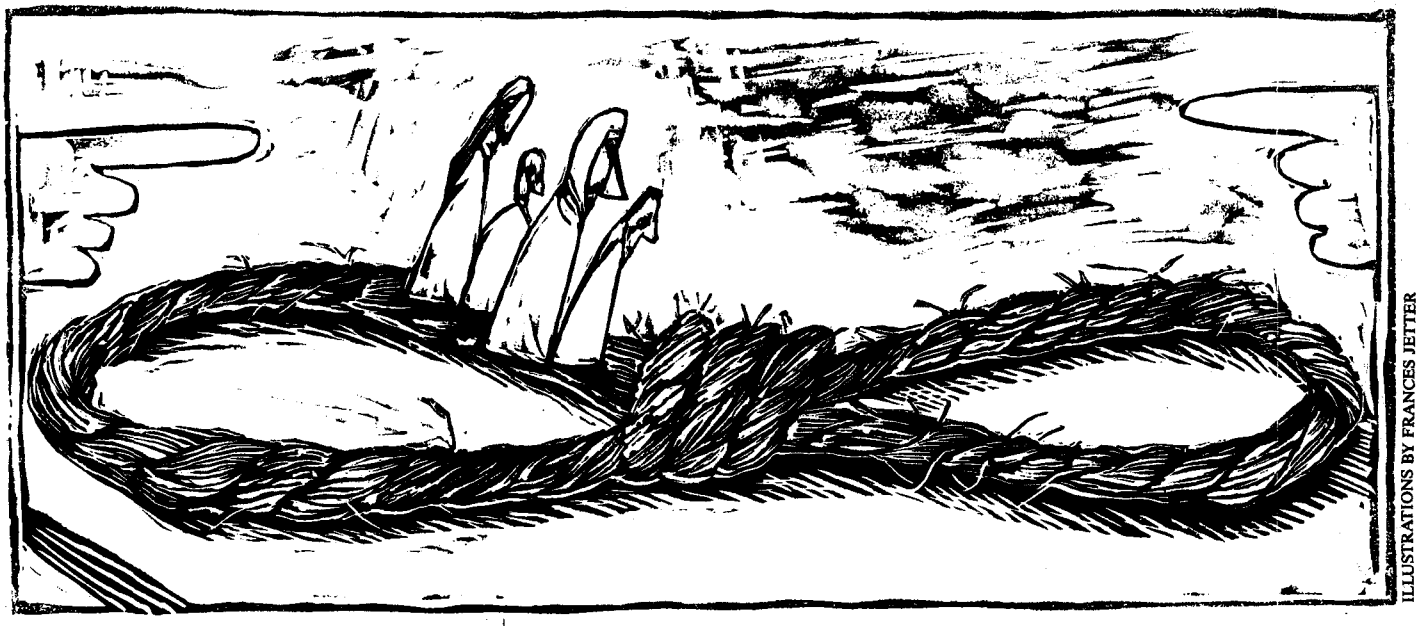
It was Marx who, improving on Hegel, remarked that all world-historical events occur twice, the first time as tragedy and the second as farce. In the case of the Kurds, the recurring crises generated by repeated interventions by foreign forces reputedly on their behalf more resemble a soap opera, though a very violent one. The nature of their predicament has not been lost on the Kurds themselves. "Kurdistan is a Godot society," our companion tells us. "We are always waiting."

The landscape we traversed last December was appropriately bleak and inhospitable. Some 4,000 villages and hamlets have been destroyed by the regime in the past ten years. We drove or slid along mud roads, and at the Great Zab River we waited for a makeshift raft of planks hammered onto empty oil barrels that was propelled across the water by two tiny motor-driven punts. (The bridge was blown up by Saddam's retreating forces last October.) The sight of the arriving ferry, chock-full of grim-looking men carrying jerrycans or herding flocks of sheep, evoked the pathos of Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, except that the Kurds have less hope of rescue.

The trek across northern Iraq turned out to be an edifying experience. Our guide, Hussein, who had received his education in Vienna and London, gave us an analysis of why the short-lived Kurdish rebellion was defeated last spring. "We are rather peasants," he said. "Kurds are used to guerrilla warfare in the mountains. Fighting in the cities and plains requires a different *Weltanschauung*. That is one factor. The other is that we ran short of ammunition, and even though we captured many tanks and helicopters, we weren't trained to use them. So we just let them sit." Accounts by others bore this out. A relief worker later explained to me that the lightly armed *peshmerga* were forced to enter the cities after the population had risen up spontaneously and evicted or killed the agents of the regime and thousands of soldiers left their units and surrendered. Once the city of Kirkuk was retaken by force, however, the guerrillas were left dangerously exposed to Saddam's helicopter gunships, which were able to strafe the main roads leading north and east from Kirkuk without fear of counterattack. Many died.

Shaqlawa (literally, "plenty of water," according to our guide) is home to most of the Kurdish political parties that make up the Iraqi Kurdistan Front. The P.U.K. occupies the largest hotel, which sits on a slope overlooking almond and apple orchards, vineyards and a spring—a small paradise in the mountains untouched by Saddam Hussein during his suppression of the uprising last year. The elevators in the hotel didn't work for lack of electricity. "America destroyed Iraq but not Saddam Hussein," our guide remarked wistfully. "What we wanted was for the United States to do just the opposite."

In Shaqlawa we switched guides and continued our journey to Sulaimaniyah, driving eastward along curving roads through the Hirran Valley. In a drizzling rain that turned into snow, we passed the melancholy remains of villages destroyed during the Anfal campaigns of 1987-89, when the bloody war between Iran and Iraq was coming to an end. Kurds have documented the destruction of 3,839 villages and hamlets during that period, twenty-four in this valley alone. The scene recalled destroyed Palestinian villages in Israel: Here and there some walls remain, archeological evidence attesting to the crime. Some of the villages are now being rebuilt. As'ad, our guide, knew them all by name. A native of Shaqlawa, he would



ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANCES JETTER

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like to move to Australia "to rest" and find a wife, because here among the Kurds "nobody wants to marry a *peshmerga*." He has spent eight years in the mountains fighting the Iraqi Army (he is 36) and knows the dates and places of the various chemical attacks carried out by Iraqi forces during the two Anfal campaigns. He was in Sheikh Wassan when helicopters dropped mustard gas on *peshmerga* and civilians on April 15 and 16, 1987. That was shortly after the current Defense Minister, Ali Hassan al-Majid (nicknamed "Ali Chemical" by the Kurds), took up his new position as head of the Baath Party in the north, and a full year before the chemical attack on Halabja. On May 27, 1987, As'ad was again exposed to a mustard gas attack, this time near the village of Malakan.

In Sulaimaniyah we found that most of the hotels were fully booked by Kurds, poised to celebrate their first New Year's Eve in freedom. We alighted in a small hotel on the outskirts of town. A band was revving up for the show, and by 9 P.M. the main dining hall was thronged by families decked out in their best attire and well supplied with bottles of whiskey. A small girl, about 5 years old, twirled to the music on top of a table for one hour straight, while a shy photographer picked his way through the crowd, occasionally snapping a picture for a few dinars. Each time he pointed his camera at a family primly posing around a table, the bottles were temporarily removed from view. Some of these people had done well in the past year: The man sitting next to me had made a bundle leasing four-wheel-drive safari jeeps to international relief agencies. The party lasted until 5 A.M., but I turned in well before midnight. As I put my bags on the bed, a rat jumped out from under the pillow and raced through the open bathroom door. When I mentioned this to As'ad, he insisted that we switch rooms. I felt embarrassed and spoiled. "You don't mind sleeping with a rat in your room?" I asked him sheepishly. "I can sleep with a lion," he said as he pushed me into the corridor. How many nights did he not sleep at all up in those mountains?

At least we had a roof over our heads. In the morning we toured the encampment at Sayed Sadiq, a large collection of tents eerily pitched over the ruins of what was once a village. The only part of town that has remained intact is the cemetery on a nearby hillside, its colored tombstones now joined by an alarming number of what look like freshly dug graves. Here Kurds who remain displaced because they have been unable to rebuild their homes or find alternative dwellings in Sulaimaniyah were hunkered down for the approaching winter. Already, rainstorms had flooded tents and caused infections among children, a Belgian doctor from Doctors Without Borders told us. What does the future have in store for these people? "Saddam Hussein has to move only one finger and all the Kurds gather up their belongings and run," a Danish relief worker said. History has proved him right, and may do so again once the political will of George Bush et al. dissipates, probably shortly after next November.

The allied presence in northern Iraq is predicated on an agreement negotiated between the allied governments and the government of Turkey, which allows the United States, Britain and France to station fighter planes at its Incirlik air base near Diyarbakir. This six-month agreement, most recently renewed at the end of December 1991, is due to be renegotiated in June. This has been a sensitive issue for Turkish politicians, who in the past have rarely won votes for permitting Western forces on Turkish soil. The government of Suleyman Demirel, once it approved the extension in December, promptly returned the powers of renewing the agreement back to Parliament, and clear signals have been given that prevailing sentiment is opposed to a further extension in June.

Iraqi forces appear ready to pounce as soon as the allies lift their protective cover. After repeatedly attacking Kurdish villages along the frontline south of Sulaimaniyah last winter, they began shelling villages along the Great Zab farther north at the end of March, presumably to test both Kurdish strength and Western resolve. In response, Brent Scowcroft, Bush's National Security Adviser, reiterated America's willingness to use military force again to defend the Kurds. But even if, with a bit of arm-twisting, the allied forces get permission to remain in Turkey an additional six months (until after the American elections), this will merely be seen as a stay of execution by the Kurds, who are well aware of what might eventually happen. The expected scenario will bear a striking resemblance to the shocking spectacle in the mountain ranges of the Iraqi border region last spring. This is why, in a race with time, the Kurds are once again debating the relative virtues of negotiating an autonomy arrangement with the central government in Baghdad. The May 17 elections may clarify who will set policy in the Kurdistan Front: the P.U.K.'s Jalal Talabani, who says he is opposed to negotiations with Saddam Hussein, or Massoud Barzani of the Kurdish Democratic Party, who seems to be in favor.

The United States, which helped to arm Saddam in the 1980s, turning the petty dictator into a regional despot, and then was forced to disarm him when the despot grew too independent for its tastes, has found in the Kurds convenient pawns in its larger political games, and the Kurds have been sufficiently desperate to go along. The 1974 autonomy agreement between Baghdad and the Kurds faltered in part because of U.S. promises to arm the Kurds if they continued to fight—which they did, at great human and political cost. Lest the same thing happen again in 1992, the Kurds may have to distance themselves politically from their foreign protectors and find independent international guarantors if they decide to come to an accord with whatever government is in power in Baghdad. □

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IRAQ TODAY

The Long, Drab Aftermath of War

Late last year a visitor to Iraq, Doug Lummis of the English-language Japanese periodical Ampo, *observed that the formerly independent oil-exporting country "was bombed, and is being embargoed, back into the Third World." The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 70,000 excess deaths in 1991 just from sickness, hunger or lack of medication, and a staggering drop in life expectancy. Before the war the average Iraqi man would live about as long as a man in the Soviet Union; now the comparison is to Mozambique and Mali. For women, the equivalent had been Saudi Arabia; now it is Zambia and India. In infant mortality, Iraq had resembled Iran; now it matches Senegal. In the countryside one finds severe malnutrition and the greatest devastation. In Baghdad, which Selma Al-Radi visited earlier this year, the signs of "Third Worldization" are different, but no less pervasive. —The Editors*

SELMA AL-RADI

It is virtually impossible to believe that just over a year ago Baghdad was being "bombed back to the Stone Age"; it certainly doesn't show. The bridges were down when I was there in April after the war, the spans' twisted metal dangling in space above the river. They are now rebuilt, and traffic is flowing normally. All the destroyed telephone exchanges have been reconstructed using prefabricated slabs and painted in soft pastel colors, pale yellow, beiges and a lovely terra cotta—plain cakes dolled up with icing. The ministries, government bureaus and other buildings that were damaged are more or less repaired. The electricity is functioning, and has been since late April of last year, well before Kuwait's was restored, even though the U.S. Army was responsible for the latter project (apparently, the replacement parts got held up at the Saudi borders). By April even the Dora oil refinery was working. How did Iraqi engineers repair it and with what? It had been bombed regularly for forty days. Telephones are working too, and it is now possible for me to dial direct to Baghdad and speak to my family there.

External appearances work well enough for the capital city so long as one does not look too closely at the details. The same cannot be said for the mental and physical state of the people; their bombed and damaged psyches cannot be patched up that easily. Not only do they have to cope with their shattered nerves, their anger and daily frustrations, but they also have to face an inflation rate that makes a mockery of living. It has been estimated that since August of 1990 the cost of a daily supply of food has risen 2,500 percent.

Real money (original printing) is getting scarce. The notes

Selma Al-Radi is an Iraqi archeologist residing in New York City. Her book on the restoration of a medieval mosque in Yemen will be published shortly.

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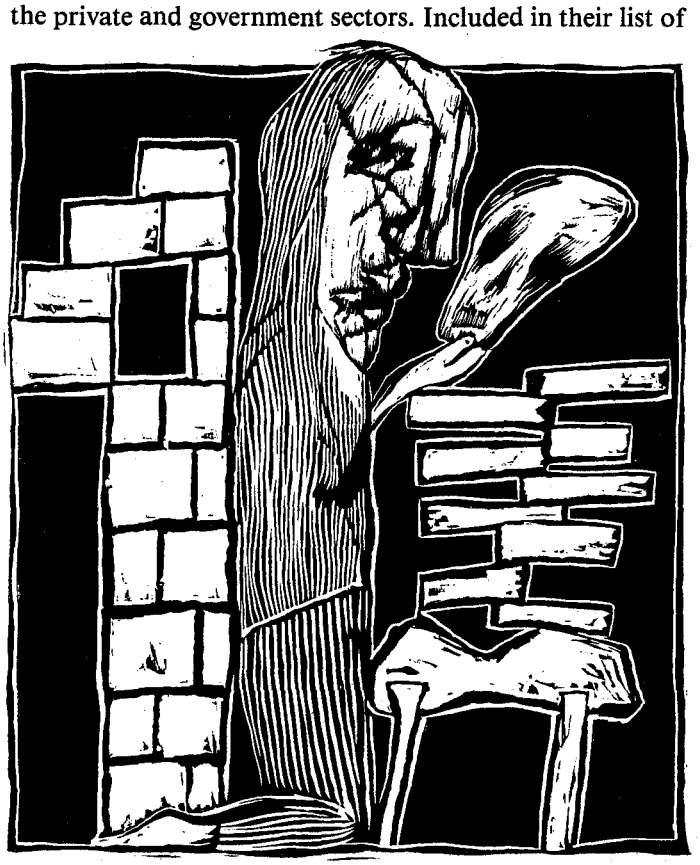
are being held up in London, where they are printed, because of the embargo. Meanwhile, the government is printing money on cheap paper, which is all that is locally available. This money crumbles with ease, disintegrating if a drop of water falls on it, and its technicolor hues run into everything they encounter. My sister irons the notes. They have no natural crispness. There is also a variety of forged money on the market, which ranges in quality from plain bad to farcical. Some notes are printed only on one side; others are cut so badly that the composition is askew and pertinent information is missing—no shopkeeper wants to take them. An awful lot of time is occupied looking for takers for the higher denominations; the lower ones are more easily spent. But no one will accept the 100-dinar note, which I have not seen; not even bank tellers. One bank in Baghdad has a notice that says, "Do not leave the bank before checking the quality and quantity of your money." Apparently, even the C.I.A. is now in on the act and is busy dropping forged money on Iraq to "destabilize the country."

When last I heard, one egg cost $1.50 and prices were rising almost daily. Not that there isn't plenty in the shops. The shelves are groaning under the weight of Iranian saffron and figs, fruits and vegetables from Turkey and Jordan, but who can afford to pay the prices? Monthly government rations can keep a family going for two weeks maximum; after that it is meager fare bought on one's salary, if one works, or slow starvation, highway robbery or begging. The last three are present in ever-increasing numbers. The rich—the nouveau riche, the profiteers, those who amass fortunes in times of war—have no problems. There is a special term in Arabic for them: *aghniya' al-harb*, or the "war rich."

The allies bombed numerous factories belonging to both the private and government sectors. Included in their list of hits were such strategic targets as a shoe factory, a disposable-syringe plant, textile and flour mills and cement plants (making reconstruction even more difficult). Spare parts cannot be imported because of the embargo, so factories all across the country remain in ruins and idle. Their employees have no salaries. Government bureaucrats are luckier; they get paid. The farmers cannot plant in adequate quantities because the allies bombed the grain silos and the storage plants that housed the seeds for this year's sowing. Although the government has reportedly been importing seeds during the past few months, the 1992 harvest will not be adequate.



The embargo has been playing havoc with everyday utilities as well. For more than a year and a half no spare parts for cars, toilets, refrigerators and other such ordinary items essential for modern living have been imported into the country. The Iraqi mania for hoarding and stockpiling has paid off this time, but the stocks are now running at an all-time low. Where hoarding did not pay off was at the start of the war. During the six-month buildup to the war every bourgeois household in Baghdad had amassed huge quantities of food in freezers, even though nobody I talked to thought it would ever come to war. When the electricity was snuffed out within the first hour of the bombing campaign, the many chickens, legs of lamb, meatballs and frozen beans that had been painstakingly accumulated became a liability. On the other hand, the dry goods—the hoarded rice, beans and lentils—kept them going for months.

The people, adrift from the apocalyptic upheavals of the bombing and its aftermath, have learned to survive. In fact, a most inventive and creative talent for survival has emerged (this was also evident with the Lebanese people during their sixteen years of vicious civil war).

Coping with the mundane necessities—where to find the cheapest food and cooking gas, the cleanest petrol or the best mechanic and fixer—occupies most of the day. There is no time for relaxing. As things break down, temporary and clever solutions have to be created. All the faucets and toilets leak; washers and flush mechanisms are jerry-built to survive until the next shopping trip to Jordan. Electric pumps, essential for filling rooftop tanks when water pressure is low, continually need replacement parts. Cars groan and crawl along the streets, alive only because mechanics are wizards at cannibalizing parts and making machines work in spite of themselves. A used car now sells for more than when it was new.

Following the American invasion of Panama, that country's National Museum of History was looted; the same thing happened in Iraq. During the insurgencies that took place in the north and south of the country immediately after the cessation of hostilities, nine museums were pillaged and burned. The Museum at Nasiriyah in the south was saved by the curator; she stood at the door and talked the looters out of their purpose—a brave woman.

Since I started my professional career as an archeologist in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, my keenest sense of the war's disruption of Iraqi institutions is in the area of antiquities. On this year's trip to Baghdad, I went to the Department of Antiquities to see how I could help and was promptly told to

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sit and type the catalogue lists of stolen objects. Some 4,000 objects are estimated to be missing. Ironically, a number of those belonged to that part of the Baghdad collection that had been sent for storage to Kirkuk in the north to make space for the crates of objects that had been taken from the Kuwait Museum. The latter, an eclectic and magnificent collection of Islamic objects privately owned by Sheik Nasser and Sheika Hussa al-Sabah and on loan to the Kuwait Museum, were stored in the basement of the Iraq Museum during the bombing. They were returned in October 1991; the Iraq Museum's collection in Kirkuk, meanwhile, had been looted during the Kurdish uprising. Luckily, a large number of objects were recovered by sheer accident, abandoned by the side of a road and still in their cases; they had been thrown off the back of a truck.

In September 1991 Unesco was given a typed catalogue that listed 2,400 known missing objects, the idea being that Unesco would then send the descriptions to Interpol, to museums in Europe and to the United States. The official responsible for stolen art said that Unesco did not have the budget to photocopy the approximately 700 pages and asked the Iraqi authorities to transfer the information onto a computer disk—this in a country whose electricity was barely working.

All computers in Baghdad have viruses; even the United Nations agencies had to reprogram theirs. Who introduced these viruses? In the Middle East, where everything is seen as a plot, the going rumor is that it is the Israelis. Who knows, it may even be true. In any case, the computer in the Department of Antiquities swallows any information that is fed into it; once it swallowed 250 object descriptions at one go. With some ingenuity we eventually learned how to foil that particular machine, and by the time I left, it was wiping out only twenty descriptions at most per day.

Meanwhile, the objects themselves have disappeared across the open borders of Iraq and into neighboring countries. They have already begun to show up on the international markets, offered by Iranian dealers to collectors and to museums in London and New York. Back in March and April of 1991 it was said that some of the smaller objects, the seals and figurines especially, were being sold to American G.I.s for twenty-dollar bills. Recently, a G.I. offered to sell his share of the booty to an American museum.

The stolen objects, including hundreds of cylinder seals bearing carved representations, terra-cotta figurines, statues and inscribed tablets, represent the full range of Mesopotamian cultures: Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian as well as medieval Islamic objects are missing, a disaster for the archeological world. If the museum numbers have been scraped off, the first thing any self-respecting thief would do, the identification rests solely on the photograph and recording of the object. Unesco finally sent the list of objects to Interpol in mid-March, six months after receiving it and only after a story appeared in the Associated Press. It has still done nothing to help Iraq assess the extent of the damage caused to its cultural monuments and archeological sites by the war, although official requests have been made. Culture, like teddy bears, is on the list of items sanctioned by the Security Council. (A few weeks ago the council's Sanctions Committee allowed

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shipment of a crate of teddy bears that had been held up for months at the Los Angeles airport pending decision first by the U.S. Treasury Department and then by the committee. The latter was debating whether teddy bears were a cultural symbol—cultural items being embargoed—and finally ruled that the bears could be listed under the embargo's medical aid exemption as "a comfort factor" to Iraqi children.)

One Friday while I was in Iraq, we went off for a day's outing to the south to visit an archeological site near Diwaniyah. Traffic was light on the highway; people do not move around much. It was a beautiful day, crisp and clear, cold with a biting wind—this was the coldest winter in decades. We walked on the mound and enjoyed the quiet stillness of the ancient remains, deserted, its people and civilization gone thousands of years. Afterward we had tea at the house of the guard; his mother cried all the time. They could not offer us any food, and we shared our picnic with them. His comment on their state could apply for most of Iraq. "We are not starving," he said, "but we are all hungry." He had been a conscript in the army in Kuwait and had walked back with the remnants of his regiment; it took them a week. All during that trek they were strafed by British-made Tornados. They learned to watch out for them and hide in ditches. Who were the pilots, Kuwaitis or Saudis?

Before I left Baghdad I saw a display that had been installed in the old Ottoman government center, the Qishlah. This grand, late-nineteenth-century building of Eastern Victorian design was recently restored with the intention of turning it into an exhibition space. The Gulf War provided the topic. Each government ministry was given a hall in which to depict the damage that had been done to its enterprise. Their engineers and architects, having little to do in a working day with no spare parts and no factories operating, had spent months meticulously creating these replicas and putting the show together. The Ministry of Industries had produced scale models of all the factories that had been bombed, two models for each, one before and one after, with the occasional third if repairs had been carried out. Row upon row of destroyed factories, burned and twisted metal lumps, the shoe factory and disposable-syringe factory included, an underwear manufacturing enterprise in Hilla, a Pepsi plant in Basra totally destroyed, plus an assortment of cement plants, textile and flour mills, etc., etc. The most extraordinary models were those made by the engineers of the Ministry of Oil. Entire refineries were reconstructed on a miniature scale, beautifully tiny oil storage tanks looking fresh and painted in strong blues and reds, their fueling pipes in shiny black. The next model showed the same refinery but burnt to a crisp, its pipes in a snarled mess, little red bulbs flickering to indicate where the bombs had hit. Photographs showed those same refineries repaired, the tanks in a somewhat shrunken state but functional all the same, reconstructed from parts that had survived the onslaught.

Rooms full of photographs of death and destruction were exhibited alongside intricate models of bridges and highways, of electricity generating plants and telecommunications towers, of grain silos and seed plants, shown before and after. A hospital bombed to shambles in Zubayr, outside Basra, a clinic demolished in Hilla—the list seems endless. The final room was the most harrowing. Dedicated to the memory of the innocents who had died in the Amiriya shelter, it displayed a horrible and grisly collection of photographs, a powerful damnation of war, of its mindless destructiveness and its waste of human lives. □

'MOTHER JONES' IN WEST VIRGINIA

Can the Miner's Daughter Do It?

ANDY YALE

Mount Hope, West Virginia

This is a land of few surprises, where change, apart from the ancient cycle of the seasons, is often looked at with mistrust and suspicion. It is a mistrust grown eloquent with despair, engendered by a century's exploitation of the region's natural riches, a suspicion fueled by the perception that whatever changes have come to these mountains have been imposed from outside by the same interests that plundered the land's wealth. Change here has largely been a process of desecration, and has left the bitter taste of disfranchisement in its wake.

The old order is visibly passing, with no sign of what is to replace it, other than stagnation and decay. The towns are full of empty storefronts, staring blankly; fields long cultivated have gone brown with stickweed; schools and post offices are closing for lack of patrons; factories are sitting empty and open to the wind. What little change occurs appears to be the last spasms of the one-hundred-year degradation that has gripped these mountains. A new strip mine, a new strip mall: both products of the same machineries that pillaged the land of its coal and timber and then ensnared its people in the coils of a tawdry consumerism.

But change, like water, finds its way into places where no one would expect it. So perhaps I shouldn't have been so surprised when I saw Charlotte Pritt on television announcing her candidacy for governor the last day in January. I knew exactly two things about Pritt: first, that she was a State Senator from Kanawha County with a reputation for being a friend of labor and the environment; and second, that Ken Sherman had been running a one-man campaign to draft her into the gubernatorial race since back in the fall.

Sherman and Pritt met at a statewide environmental conference in 1990. A longtime environmental activist, Sherman has championed a lot of causes over the years with a zeal that many of his friends dismiss as quixotic. When Sherman first started his drive to put her in the governor's mansion, Pritt told him she'd run if he got 250,000 signatures on the draft petition. Since 250,000 names is roughly 28 percent of the registered voters in the state, most people considered this Pritt's tactful way of putting the project out to pasture for a good

Andy Yale, a writer and photographer, lives in southern West Virginia.

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long graze—say about four years—until she had time to build a statewide organization or got sick of politics. But here she was on the tube announcing her candidacy, despite the fact that Sherman's last tally had shown fewer than 10,000 names on the petition. Given the lukewarm response to the draft petition, Pritt's decision to run seemed to have sprung more from a semimystical belief in her own destiny than from any indication of voter interest. But the events that followed suggested that maybe her contact with reality was better than I had thought.

The evening that Pritt entered the race, a Charleston TV station conducted a telephone poll in which Pritt trounced the incumbent, Gaston Caperton, garnering 93 percent of the vote to Caperton's anemic 7 percent. The next day Attorney General Mario Palumbo withdrew from his re-election race and announced he was a candidate for governor. Local pundits think it was Pritt's showing in the Channel 8 poll that gave Palumbo the backbone to run against Caperton. Whatever the reason, the May 12 Democratic primary is now a three-way race, and the campaign promises to be a hard-fought one.

Pritt's surprise showing in the poll may have been as much a measure of voter disgust with the incumbent as an indication of her popularity. Caperton, a millionaire whose family fortune is based on coal and insurance holdings, is widely disliked for such measures as the 6 percent tax he slapped on groceries soon after taking office. In fact, he is so unpopular that his Republican opponent, Cleve Benedict, is seen as having a serious chance at winning the election. For a Republican to have more than a snowball's chance in hell in this staunchest of Democratic strongholds has more to do with the ferment that has gripped the body politic than with any appeal Benedict may have for voters.

For Benedict is another millionaire, heir to a sizable chunk of the Procter & Gamble fortune. The spectacle of these two scions of old money contending for the governorship of a state that has an average per capita income near the poverty line struck many observers as offensive. Among them was Charlotte Pritt, whose last-minute entry into the race was largely based on her aversion to the lack of choice that would have otherwise confronted voters.

"One millionaire running against another millionaire in the state of West Virginia is obscene," Pritt says. "These people have never had to worry about health care, they've never had to worry about having enough to eat, they've never had to worry about getting a job, and if they did get a job, whether it would pay well enough to make ends meet. They have no idea how most West Virginians live, yet they're trying to lead the state."

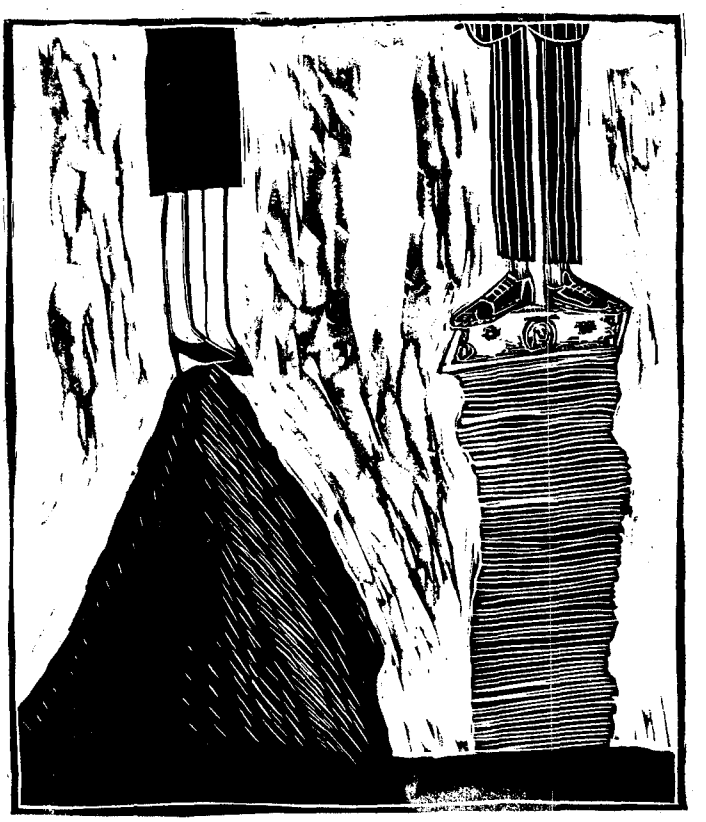
For her part, Pritt claims firsthand knowledge of the woes and fears of the average mountaineer. Raised on a 200-acre farm on Buzzard Rock Mountain, daughter of a coal miner, oldest of six children, she walked a mile each way to a two-room school, carried water from a well to the house and helped tend the big garden that fed her family. She doesn't recall being hungry, but she remembers a haunting fear of sickness—despite the family's self-sufficiency and her father's hard labor in the mines, the Pritts could not afford health care.

Pritt's hardscrabble childhood is probably one of her strongest ties to the voters, a majority of whom look back wistfully on a similar past. They share a nostalgia centered around remembered hardships, which seems to serve as a powerful touchstone in their sense of personal identity. And the experiences associated with the old self-sufficient mountain way of life have been elevated to an almost iconic status, now that this life itself is gone. Pritt isn't bashful about invoking these icons in campaign speeches. But it's clear that her background means more to her than just a convenient way to get votes. It seems a genuine determinant of much of her politics, and her voting record during eight years in the legislature reflects this.

Pritt fought valiantly to preserve mine safety measures, she sponsored a parental leave bill that became law and she has been in the forefront of many battles to stave off the nightmare environmental scenarios that raise their ugly heads with depressing regularity. Pritt sponsored bills to license lay midwives, to protect women against domestic violence and to introduce universal health care, which she says was prompted by memories of her fear of getting sick as a child. So unbending is her stand on the issues that her colleagues in Charleston have taken to calling her "the Mother Jones of the West Virginia legislature."

Pritt doesn't balk at the comparison to the legendary foul-mouthed Irish agitator who made things hot for coal operators in the early years of this century. She says that being likened to Mother Jones is the highest compliment she could receive. "It says I'm courageous, hard-working and determined—and a staunch friend to working people."

Yet despite her close affiliation with labor—the A.F.L.-C.I.O. rated her voting record at 100 percent—Pritt has been endorsed by only two unions, the Ironworkers and the Boilermakers, along with several chapters of the West Virginia State



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Employees Union. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. endorsed Caperton, whom it is difficult to view as a friend of labor no matter how far you stretch the bubble gum. Pritt points out that the Governor has been involved with a local anti-union committee and has bitterly opposed collective bargaining by state employees. She says the A.F.L.-C.I.O. endorsement of Caperton "can't be justified in any way. Someone made an unholy alliance."

Another such alliance, long in the offing, became apparent on March 14 when the United Mine Workers of America endorsed Caperton. The union is still potent in the region, and its backing carries a moral force that extends beyond its members, influencing many voters who have no current involvement with the union, other than an emotional one. Pritt, who has close ties to the U.M.W.A.—her father is a former president of Local 1766—was dismayed but not surprised. She angrily denounced the endorsement as a "pact with the Devil" and maintains it does not reflect rank-and-file sentiment.

'The people have to have a choice,' Pritt says.

The decision to endorse Caperton seems to be an embarrassment to the U.M.W.A., if one can judge by the touchy, defensive tone union staff members assume when discussing it. Jim Grossfeld, a press officer at the International headquarters in Washington, seemed to resent being questioned about the endorsement at all. "Charlotte Pritt has a fine record," he said, "but so does Gaston Caperton, and we felt he was the wisest choice for the U.M.W.A. to endorse." When I pressed Grossfeld for particulars on how this decision was reached, he referred me to Mike Burdiss, the U.M.W.A.'s international representative in Charleston.

Burdiss was initially no less defensive, characterizing my two neutrally worded questions as "two separate attacks on the union." He did give me the facts, however: The state compact council, 165 rank-and-file members elected from locals statewide, had met on March 14 and voted 156 to 9 for Caperton. Asked about rumors that pressures from Washington influenced the compact, Burdiss vehemently stated, "The U.M.W.A. doesn't do business that way." He praised Pritt's voting record and claimed he had "begged Charlotte not to run at this time," because the U.M.W.A. is too involved in a fight over health benefits to give her the support she needs to win. He also maintained that the union had not suffered under Caperton's administration, and cited the restraint the Governor had placed on the State Police during recent labor disputes. This claim that there is now a kinder, gentler constabulary seemed rather out of character coming from the union of the Armed March, the Battle of Blair Mountain and the Pittston strike. Taken with the uptight manner in which union officials reacted to questions about the Caperton endorsement, Burdiss's remarks suggested a hidden agenda that might not reflect rank-and-file sentiment.

To check this out, I spoke separately with two mineworkers, both officers in their respective locals. "What the U.M.W.A. believes is completely different from my views," said the first. "I think rank and file is not going for Caperton that much. Caperton's family goes back to coal operators, not union. Pritt seems pretty good to me. As to Palumbo, I don't know much about him."

Asked about the union compact's decision to endorse Caperton, he said, "The compact in some ways might be all right, but it really doesn't represent rank and file. They vote more along the lines of how they're told to vote. There's a certain amount of influence from national headquarters as well."

The second miner, an elected member of the compact, was in a good position to add more details about how this influence is exercised. He explained that in previous elections each candidate appeared separately before the compact to answer questions. In 1992, however, this practice was abandoned without explanation, and it was "recommended" by the compact committee that Caperton receive the endorsement. "A lot of people who made the decision were influenced by what the hierarchy told them. And debate was stifled by a motion made to limit speeches to two minutes each. The compact was created to screen public officials up for re-election. You don't go with a millionaire just because he can win. You go with someone with a good voting record."

When I repeated U.M.W.A. spokesman Grossfeld's remarks about Caperton's excellent record to this delegate, he snorted, "If Mr. Grossfeld said that Caperton has an excellent record, that shows how out of touch with reality he is regarding Caperton." He cited Caperton's membership on anti-union committees and pointed out that the average time taken to adjudicate black-lung compensation claims had doubled under his administration. "It's coal operator money in that fund, not tax money. If there's no other reason to refuse the endorsement, that's reason enough for me as a rank-and-file miner."

Charlotte Pritt laughed when I repeated Mike Burdiss's comment about Caperton's restraint of the State Police. "They [the unions] are scared they're going to have to strike if they don't resolve the health fund dispute," she said. "This is what the union has reduced itself to—they're scared of the State Police. It would probably make John L. Lewis sick to his stomach."

The lack of official labor endorsements may worry Pritt, but it doesn't shake her profound belief that she can win. With a minuscule budget, a staff made up entirely of volunteers, and minimal media coverage, she plans to spend the time between now and the primary in May waging an all-out grassroots fight. When she was an unknown high school English teacher, Pritt ran a homemade door-to-door campaign to win her first term in the legislature. But many close to the campaign are worried about the feasibility of a similar effort on a statewide scale. While Pritt shines in addressing small groups—in person she radiates intelligence and sincerity—it is an open question whether she can reach enough voters to offset the media's determination to ignore her candidacy. What little attention she does get tends to come from *The Charleston Gazette*, which has blasted her on several occasions on its editorial page.

Pritt is further hampered by the Governor's refusal to de-

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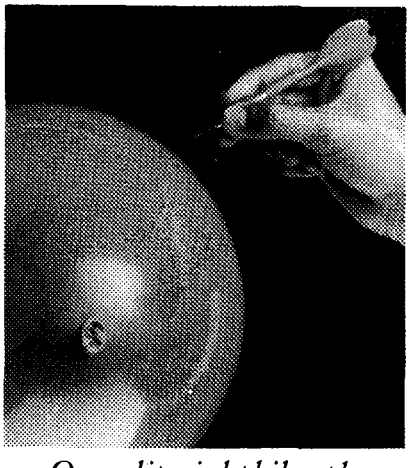

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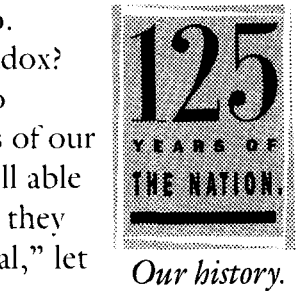

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bate her or Palumbo. With a campaign chest of more than a million dollars, Caperton can buy all the TV time he is likely to need. An unimpressive public speaker, he seems to be playing it safe, but his refusal to meet his opponents strikes many people here as an arrogant dismissal of the democratic process and may backfire.

Whatever the outcome, the power brokers the current Governor represents appear to view Pritt's candidacy as a dangerous precedent. She puts it succinctly: "That a coal miner's daughter would challenge a millionaire has them in turmoil." It's a fair bet that many voters will see the contest in the same archetypal terms. And this is perhaps the trump card in Pritt's hand. Given a choice between a millionaire and one of their own, most West Virginians are likely to remember where their true allegiance lies.

In the meantime, Pritt seems to be doing well. Recent statewide polls show the race to be too close to call. Pritt's credibility as a candidate has been established, and this heartens her. "If I don't win the primary, I'll run as an independent," she says. "The people have to have a choice."

That choice will be made clear in May. Pritt's candidacy may be nothing more than a final ghost dance of archaic mountain values in the face of the media culture that is finally overwhelming them. Or it might signal a genuine groundswell of popular anger that will sweep her into the governor's mansion in the fall. With a foot in both worlds, the old and the new, Pritt represents a synthesis in which the present and past meld in a meaningful way. In these enduring mountains, which have gazed unwaveringly on so much change, such a synthesis still seems possible. □

Gulf War

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

war but our last nontelevision one in its inability either to adhere to precise scheduling or achieve closure. Instead, total TV was born in certain mesmeric moments in the eighties when the whole nation seemed to have been mobilized at couchside to stare at the same images across many channels.

Starting with the Iran hostage crisis of 1979-81 and running through the Gulf War, these glimpses of total TV generally had the theme of America or Americans held hostage—most humiliatingly in Iran; most tragically in various terrorist plane-nappings and murders; most pathetically in the Challenger disaster, in which a schoolteacher's life was hostaged to the failure of American technology; most absurdly in the little girl hostaged to the elements by her fall down a well shaft in Texas; most triumphantly in the images of students kissing American soil after their ostensible rescue from Grenada.

From the media's point of view, most of these events were, fortunately, quite limited. One kidnapped plane on an airport runway; one embassy surrounded by a crowd; a few film clips of an explosion replayed a hundred times—all of the above surrounded by talking heads; or one small war in a distant place with only the most minimal government-supplied visuals. To create more expansive total TV scenarios would have been ruinously expensive without outside help. Even Ted Turner's Cable News Network, set up for any and all twenty-four-hours-a-day media events, would have quickly felt the financial strain of total TV if left purely to its own devices. Just the attempt to re-create the Good War for the miniseries adapted from Herman Wouk's novel *The Winds of War* proved a financial catastrophe for ABC. It was not enough to mobilize an audience. New forms of sponsorship were needed.

Here we have to remember the corporate context within which the possibility for Gulf War–style total television developed. On the one hand, during the eighties media giants like Time-Warner, Murdoch's News Corporation and the Maxwell combine were being stapled together, and under their roofs distinct media forms were blurring into mix-and-match TV/movie/newspaper/magazine/book/music/theme-park entities. On the other hand, just to put such entities together (as corporations gobbled and were gobbled up, merged and purged their way through the decade) was to incur incalculable billions of dollars of debt. The burden of this debt—and a crumbling ad market by decade's end—gave rise to new pressures to "downsize" these unwieldy, not especially synergistic new entities. Fewer personnel and cheaper production methods were instantly needed to make them more financially palatable to nervous owners (or suddenly anxious potential buyers).

General Electric, Capital Cities and the Tisch family operation, which had come to control respectively NBC, ABC and CBS, also found themselves facing an assault on their audiences and their advertisers from cable television and Murdoch's new fourth network, Fox. The swift erosion of network dominance in the late eighties led money managers within each network to hack away at their prestigious but often unprofitable news fiefdoms. If the Gulf War revealed the media's ability to mount technical operations on an unprecedented scale, it also exposed the need of the financially pressed media giants (and their upstart competitors) for sponsorship on a scale hitherto unimaginable. This is what the Bush Administration seemed to offer in the Gulf War—an outside production company able to organize a well-produced, subsidized total event that could be channeled to the American public at, relatively speaking, bargain-basement prices.

With its million or more uniformed extras, its vast sets and its six-month preproduction schedule filled with logistical miracles (and a few fiascos, too), the Gulf War production involved intense military/media planning on a global scale. It had its own built-in "coming attractions"—the many variations on "Showdown in the Gulf" that teased viewers with a possible January opening on all screens in domestic multiplexes across the nation. It had its dazzling Star Wars–style graphics, theme music and logos, as well as stunningly prime-timed first moments (Disneyesque fireworks over Baghdad).

To succeed as a production company, the Pentagon had to offer the networks five things: first, funding based on a relatively limited financial contribution from the networks themselves. This was accomplished by a State Department/

Tom Engelhardt, a Guggenheim fellow, is at work on a book about children and American culture in the post–World War II era.

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Pentagon financing team that sought out foreign investment much as any Hollywood production team might have—from the Japanese, the Germans, the Saudis and so on—$50 billion, you might say, for "foreign rights," money that insured a break-even point on the government side of the enterprise almost before the first missile was fired; second, the ability to organize round-the-clock, on-location support systems across a vast theater of operations; third, a pre-edited flow of visuals available to all channels; fourth, control over access to the set of the production, thus limiting internetwork competition and consequently network costs (those last two usually fall under the rubric of "censorship"); and finally, the sort of precise scheduling and closure that television craves.

At the Pentagon, much thought had already gone into matters of scheduling and closure—this, out of a post-Vietnam desire to create a Third World battlefield where maximal weaponry and minimal U.S. casualties would guarantee public support. In the eighties, a new wave of "smart" (and not-so-smart but highly destructive) weaponry was brought on-line to complement an already impressive Vietnam-era arsenal. In the Persian Gulf, as a result, the preponderance and superiority of American weaponry—as well as the near nonappearance of the "enemy"—made slaughter on a vast scale, at will and with an eye to television's tight time requirements, achievable.

What President Bush then could promise the nation—and the media—was a war that could be scheduled, and this promise was structured not only into war planning but into the minds of the warmakers. As Bob Woodward reported in his book *The Commanders*, "In the White House, Bush, Quayle, Scowcroft and Sununu gathered in the small private study adjacent to the Oval Office to watch television. When the sounds of bombing could be heard behind the voices of the reporters still in their Baghdad hotel rooms, Bush, visibly relieved, said, 'Just the way it was scheduled.' "

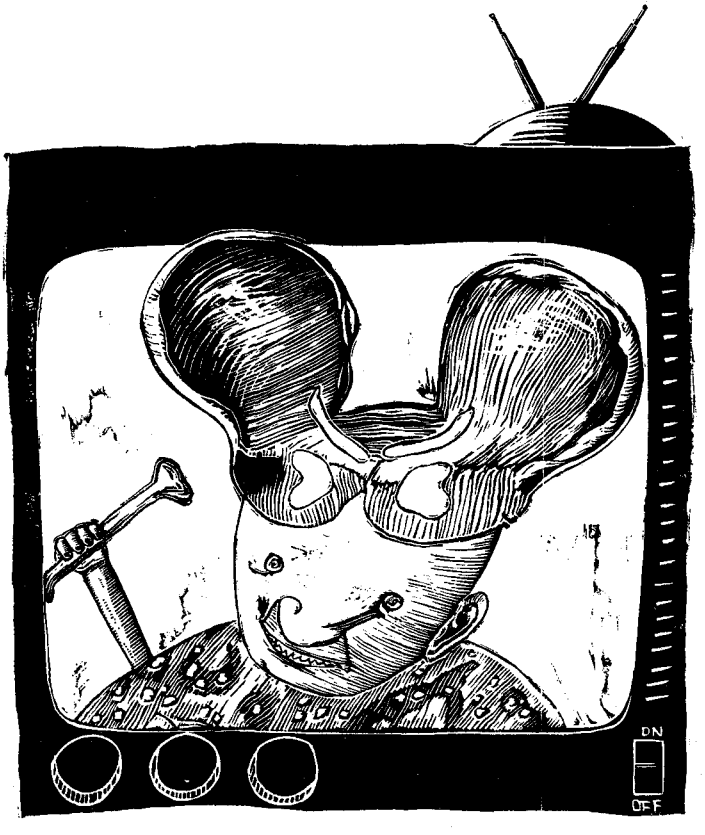
Pressure for closure was built into the war's logo-ized form—"The War in the Gulf, Day X"—and reassurance on this score was forthcoming from the war's first moments. In fact, one striking feature of the war was how often the viewing public was told that it was unfolding "on schedule." Nearly every military news conference included such a reminder, and the schedule being referred to was clearly television's. The public was constantly assured by the war's supporters that it would be clean, manageable, foreseeable, endable—in short, a program.

In the past, the reporting of war had been successfully organized and controlled by governments, and generals had polished their images with the press or even, like Douglas MacArthur, had had publicists do it for them—and, of course, images of war and generalship American-style had been re-created on-screen innumerable times by actors. But never had generals and war planners gone before the public as actors, supported by all the means a "studio" could muster on their behalf, and determined to produce a program that would fill the entire day across the dial for the full time of a "war." What we have to imagine (for we were not shown it) is that behind the dark curtains that screened off the multiple daily press conferences of the various actors, each in his distinctive fashion/camouflage outfit, each wielding his distinctive sitcom quips and put-downs, each giving his distinctive impression of the Victorious General or the In-Control Press Spokesman, lay a globe-spanning network of scriptwriters, makeup artists, fashion consultants, graphic designers, production managers, film editors (otherwise known as "censors") and even a military version of the traditional network Standards and Practices department, with its guidelines for on-air acceptability.

Only military pre-editing of virtually all aspects of the Gulf War made total television's six-week-long ratings hit a possibility. Hence, despite the uneasiness of some journalists on the scene, the TV networks understandably offered no significant protest against the censoring and controlling mechanisms of the Bush Administration—which were largely in their interest. In fact, no well-known media company was willing to join more marginal publications like *The Nation* and New York's *Village Voice* and journalists like *Newsday*'s Sydney Schanberg in their legal challenge to Pentagon censorship policies [see Jacqueline E. Sharkey, "The Media's War," page 617]. In this way, the Gulf War experience, which offered the media giants new possibilities in the production of entertainment, also brought journalism's already tattered post-Watergate, post-Vietnam heroic self-image down to earth.

It's not surprising, then, that reporters in hotel lounges in Dhahran watching the war on TV just like everyone else would see the military's media role mainly as a censorious one, but this was to miss the point. A more useful comparison would be to those TV production companies that, in the early eighties, began creating a new-style children's television program. Usually done in conjunction with toy companies and their ad agencies, these shows in one quick leap eliminated the boundaries between ad and show by making what were essentially animated, program-length catalogues for toys.

In a similar way, the Gulf War production launched a major



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new form of the program-length commercial. It was as if the whole post-Vietnam era in America had built toward this forty-three-day-long ad, intent on selling both domestic and foreign markets on the renewal of American virtues. If you want to feel good, be U.S. If you want to experience technology and triumph, buy U.S. It even used the simplified visual language of the eighties ad—the upbeat, brightly colored (sales) story, whose happy ending was meant to confound the darkness of the world beyond the screen with the sprightliness of the product. No one looking at the many carefully framed visuals of the Gulf War could doubt the advertorial nature of the show, segmented as it was into sets of mini-ads for various aspects of itself.

What made this program-length ad unique, though, was the length of the program, and the fact that its newness and its commercial form unexpectedly threw into question the nature of normal television advertising. If *this* was The Ad, then what were those? Although CNN, ready-made for total TV, experienced rising ad rates and revenues during the war, for the networks it was another story. Non-CNN advertisers were unsure of how their ads would coexist with "war" in this puzzling new version of entertainment time. Of course, the war they, like so many media experts, military men and journalists, were imagining was a war of body bags. In the end, their failure to grasp the nature of this new media experience and their consequent refusal to support the production helped make total television into a financial fiasco for the big three networks. They found themselves showing a vast commercial while losing revenue from the very advertisers who felt more comfortable inside *Cheers* than inside the cheering framework of a war to destroy Iraq. (According to media critic John MacArthur in his new book, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War*, NBC, which like CBS ran behind ABC in the ratings, claimed losses of $55 million on its war coverage, including $20 million in withdrawn ad revenue. One postwar result at CBS, at least, was a further downsizing of its news department.)

This confusion over sponsorship reflected not only total television's primitive state but the likelihood that "war" might not be its ultimate venue. For one thing, the military, with its adversarial attitude toward the media, inhibited the flow of fresh images that might have fed total television's voracious appetite, and so left Monday Night War's color commentators like Anthony Cordesman (ABC) and retired Gen. Michael Dugan (CBS) trapped at halftime with no game to call.

In fact, no greater problem faced the military/media production team than its inability to establish a suitably epic story at the heart of total television. From the initial "Battle in the Gulf" (the 1981 dogfights with Libyan MIGs over the Gulf of Sidra) to the invasions of Grenada and Panama, the Reagan and Bush administrations had engaged in a decade-long experiment in the controlled presentation of American battlefield triumph. This attempt to re-establish a triumphalist American war story via the media and in the wake of Vietnam ended up, in the Persian Gulf, as little more than a passing advertorial. Missing in action in the war's coverage were not so much independent media, which had seldom existed in the history of American warfare (if anything, military censorship and misleading reportage were far more severe in World War II and Korea), but any sense of what form a lasting, empathetic war narrative could take without a military struggle in which to ground itself.

Off-screen, events in the gulf were closer to a mass electrocution than a war, and as a result, on-screen no Iraqi aggressors fell by the hundreds from their charging camels in the sort of battle our film tradition called for. Nor could armies be discovered clashing in their multi-thousands, nor tank battles—billed as potentially the largest since World War II—ranging across desert vistas. In fact, the crucial production number, D-day, renamed "G-day" (for ground war day), turned out to be no day at all. The penultimate event of the post-Vietnam era, in which the Not-Vietnamese were to be crushed in battle, had to be elided, for at the heart of this technically awesome spectacle was an embarrassingly plotless and unwatchable slaughter. The best that could be offered from an enemy who refused to put in an appearance were scenes of bedraggled Iraqis emerging from their dugouts to surrender and shots of Iraqi-commandeered cars, trucks and buses turned to charred rubble on the highway out of Kuwait City by American planes.

In fact, only when reporters were loosed to dash ahead into Kuwait City was there a hint of an on-screen story. If the liberation-of-Paris-style crowds were sparse in population-decimated Kuwait, at least the visuals flowed and journalists had an opportunity to simulate war reporters of the past, down to their safari jackets.

If the Gulf War's lack of a story line accounts, in part, for its remarkable disappearance from American politics and culture, it was not for want of the footage of death. This was, after all, a screen war at the "front" as well as at home. We know, for instance, that cameras shooting through the night-vision gunsights of Apache AH-64 attack helicopters caught graphic scenes of confused and helpless Iraqi soldiers being blown to bits by unseen attackers. But these outtakes would have been appropriate only to a very different production—one geared to a horror film, not a war story.

Given its prodigious vanishing act, perhaps the Gulf War will indeed have little lasting effect on our society. (Its effects on Iraq and the rest of the Middle East are obviously another matter.) Total television, however, could have far more staying power, hinting at possible media and advertising futures we can hardly imagine today. It points toward a world in which, increasingly, everything gets done for the media; in which the more fully meshed media systems of the twenty-first century will need to discover new, more powerful, more all-purpose sponsoring relationships, ones that, at the very least, can raise to a higher power the single-sponsor show (*The Alcoa Hour, General Electric Theater*) of a simpler corporate age. Whichever media giants dominate in the years ahead, the problem of how to pay for such global entertainment shows, what those shows can possibly be and what stories they can be made to tell must be faced. What form total television will take in the future—whether on screen we will see slaughter or some friendlier sport—and who will be its sponsors we can hardly guess. □

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EDITORIALS.

(*Continued From Page 617*)
by an unprecedented coalition of top media executives who could apply political pressure to see that the agreement is kept. But the document contains no ground rules—nor any requirement that the Pentagon consult with journalists before writing such rules.

"What the Pentagon is doing is giving itself a club to use over journalists," says Scripps Howard reporter Joan Lowy, who covered the Gulf War. "They're going to write these ground rules, but we don't know what they are yet. And then if you don't go by their interpretation of the ground rule as they interpret it under security review, they'll kick you out. It's a very effective form of censorship."

During the gulf conflict, Lowy said, the Pentagon interpreted ground rules and guidelines "very broadly, to discourage or outright censor anything that was reflecting negatively on U.S. or allied forces." Two negotiators for the media said in recent interviews that they didn't know what the press would do if the Defense Department violated the proposed agreement. Knight-Ridder Washington bureau chief Clark Hoyt suggested that the agreement might provide the basis for a media lawsuit. When told of Hoyt's suggestion, Franklin Siegel of the Center for Constitutional Rights asked, "Where were they when their case was strong and when it would have made a difference?" Siegel represented *The Nation* and other plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit filed against President Bush and Defense Department personnel in January 1991. The suit maintained that some Gulf War press restrictions were unconstitutional and were based on political, not military, considerations. No major daily newspaper or television news organization joined the suit, which was dismissed in April 1991, after the war had ended.

Negotiator Stanley Cloud, *Time* Washington bureau chief, acknowledged that the media will have to rely on the Pentagon's good faith. In the contest "between the military and the press, one side has weapons and the other doesn't," he said. "In the end, we are forced to abide by their rules even if we don't like it."

The Pentagon's success at managing its wartime image gives the military little incentive to adhere to the proposed agreement. Seventy-nine percent of Americans supported the Gulf War press restrictions, according to a poll taken during the conflict by the Times Mirror Center for the People & the Press.

Jane Kirtley, executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, said the very existence of the proposed agreement is an admission of how weak the media's position is now. She says endorsing the agreement is "writing your own death warrant." JACQUELINE E. SHARKEY

Jacqueline E. Sharkey is a journalism professor at the University of Arizona and an investigative reporter. Her book, Under Fire: U.S. Military Restrictions on the Media From Grenada to the Persian Gulf, *is available from the Center for Public Integrity, Washington, D.C.*

Segregation Is ≠

When does a school district that has been ordered by the Court to end illegal segregation complete its legal obligation? The question is important because once the obligation is fulfilled, the district may be able to reinstitute "neighborhood schools" even if that means a return to racially segregated classrooms. More than two decades ago, the Warren Supreme Court said that school authorities must not merely end segregative practices but must also eliminate the "vestiges of discrimination" and achieve a system in which there are not white schools and black schools, "just schools."

On March 31, the Rehnquist Supreme Court decided in *Pitts v. Freeman* that this broad requirement could be sliced and diced. In an opinion by Justice Kennedy, the Court held that the DeKalb County, Georgia, system would be released from court supervision because it had complied for several years with orders governing student assignments, even though schools remained racially identifiable because of segregated faculty assignments.

This formulaic ruling moves the nation another step away from the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* that equality of opportunity would be secured through integrated schools and an integrated society. But beyond its narrow holding, the *Pitts* decision was murky, leaving lower courts and school systems without any real constitutional guidance.

Moreover, what was reported as an 8-to-0 decision in its result actually reflected a 4-to-4 split in the thinking of the Justices. Justice Blackmun, in a separate concurrence for himself and colleagues Stevens and O'Connor, noted that in the thirty-eight years since *Brown*, students in DeKalb County "never have attended a desegregated school system even for one day." In a separate concurrence, Justice Souter thought it worth mentioning that the segregated housing patterns in DeKalb County might well have been influenced by the long regimen of segregation in its schools. Both concurrences urged that, when the case returned to the lower courts, the school system be required to demonstrate that current conditions of segregation are not the result of past segregative action.

The split opinions of the Court may be an accurate relection of the nation's continuing ambivalence and anxiety on race. Litigation will continue, and next time around the deciding vote may be cast by Clarence Thomas, who did not arrive in time for this year's decision. In a remarkable letter to the new Justice, published in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, Judge A. Leon Higginbotham pointedly demonstrated the contradictions in Thomas's acknowledgment of his debt to Thurgood Marshall and the *Brown* case while repudiating their legacy in his words and decisions. The Court's next school desegregation case may reveal whether any of this has sunk in.

WILLIAM L. TAYLOR

William L. Taylor is a civil rights lawyer based in Washington, D.C.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

We Have Met the Enemy

ROBERT HEILBRONER

HEAD TO HEAD: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe, and America. *By Lester Thurow. Morrow. 336 pp. $25.*

> Suppose that someone had told a keen fifteenth-century observer that some part of the globe was about to conquer the rest of the world and then asked that observer to guess whom the conqueror might be. The right answer would, of course, be Europe, but basing his reply upon his knowledge of the world at that time, our observer would probably have answered China. China was the first to invent gunpowder, printing, and the compass. China had an efficient unified national government while Europe was still a group of quarreling principalities. A Chinese armada with more than one hundred thousand soldiers had already set foot on the east coast of Africa. In comparison, Europe's explorations were very small-scale. No nation could match the power of China. If there was a country about to conquer the world, it had to be China.

I steal this paragraph from the middle of Lester Thurow's powerful new book because it sets the stage for the problem he forces us to confront. Only thirty years ago, had some keen twentieth-century observer been asked to answer the same question as his predecessor four centuries back, is there any doubt as to which nation he would have chosen to be "China"? Did not America dominate every aspect of economic life, from the production of steel and automobiles to the new technologies of television and the emerging computer? Was not its currency the only one in the world that was literally as good as gold; was not its per capita income three or four times that of Germany and well over ten times that of Japan? The parallel is a disquieting one. Is the United States to be the China of the twenty-first century, sinking into poverty and powerlessness behind its Great Wall, as did real China in the parable that Thurow recounts?

As Thurow's title suggests, *Head to Head* is an inquiry into the struggle for economic dominance in the century ahead. It is a stinging examination, a barrage of disconcerting facts and comparisons, a series of often brilliant, and invariably upsetting, summary judgments. Even though the author leaves us with the explicit conclusion that the game is still open, so that with a great effort of will and intelligence we may yet come out on top—or perhaps more accurately, on a par with Europe and Japan—the implicit message is darker. The necessary changes will require far-reaching shifts in beliefs as well as institutions. If we have learned anything over this troubled century it is that both institutions and beliefs die hard.

No one will quarrel with Thurow's premise that American economic performance cries out for critical examination. Over the past three or four decades we have seen the dismantling of American economic power on a scale and with a rapidity without precedent in modern, perhaps in all, capitalist history. One after another, industries of world-commanding size established by domestic inventive and managerial talent—steel, machine tools, chemicals, television, consumer electronics and of course that quintessential American product, the automobile—have been wiped out or humbled by foreign "competition," which is to say, by superior foreign performance. Looking at the picture from a more Olympian and more recent perspective, Thurow tells us that

> in 1970, 64 of the world's 100 largest industrial corporations were found in the United States, 26 were found in Europe, and only 8 in Japan. By 1988 only 42 of the 100 largest were located in the United States, 33 were located in Europe, and 15 were located in Japan. . . . Outside manufacturing, the same trends exist. In 1970, 19 of the world's 50 largest banks were North American, 16 were European, and 11 were Japanese. By 1988 only 5 were North American, 17 were European, and 24 were Japanese. In 1990 there were no American banks in the top 20.

How does one explain this astonishing decline? In Thurow's view, one underlying element lies in the evolving character of industrial technology itself. In the late nineteenth century, when America first established itself as a premier world manufacturer, the competitive ranking of nations was largely determined by their natural-resource endowments and capital-labor proportions. Thus cotton was grown in the American South because climate and soil were right and labor was cheap and abundant. Such advantages tended to be long-lasting, once gained. Where the strategic elements were capital and scale of output—in steel, for example—a nation that seized the commanding heights early, as did America, tended to enjoy its leadership for a long time.

A would-be top-ranking nation must become an assiduous developer of its human skills and talents.

The last four decades, however, have witnessed a critical shift in the elements that determine one's comparative advantage in trade. Advances in the technology of transportation and communications have vastly reduced the importance of unchangeable resources or sheer distance. Thurow writes:

> Consider what are commonly believed to be the seven key industries of the next few decades—microelectronics, biotechnology, the new materials industries, civilian aviation, telecommunications, robots plus machine tools, and computers plus software. All are brainpower industries. Each could be located anywhere on the face of the globe. Where they will be located depends upon who can organize the brainpower to capture them. In the century ahead comparative advantage will be man-made.

This requires that a would-be top-ranking nation become an assiduous developer of its human skills and talents. America fares very poorly in such a cross-country rating. The math scores of the top 1 percent of our high school seniors would place them in the fiftieth percentile in Japan. Our graduate programs are unrivaled in the modern world, but so are our K-12 programs, unfortunately in the opposite direction. In addition, unlike Germany and many other European nations, we have no systematic program of apprenticeships to provide upward ladders for noncollege students. Because

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we tend to regard labor as an expensive and balky cost rather than as a potential source of imaginative productivity, we accord much lower status to human resource management than to finance or merchandising skills. Corporate officials in charge of developing personnel rank poorly in the U.S. managerial hierarchy; in Japan they are regarded as second only to the C.E.O. Paralleling our neglect of human capital is our showing in research and development, where human capital is applied. A quick look at comparative R&D expenditures might lead one to believe that America is right up there with the competition: Sweden gets top place, Japan third, Germany fourth, the United States fifth. But take away defense-related R&D and we slip to tenth place; and compare only *private* R&D spending and we rank twentieth out of twenty-three industrial nations.

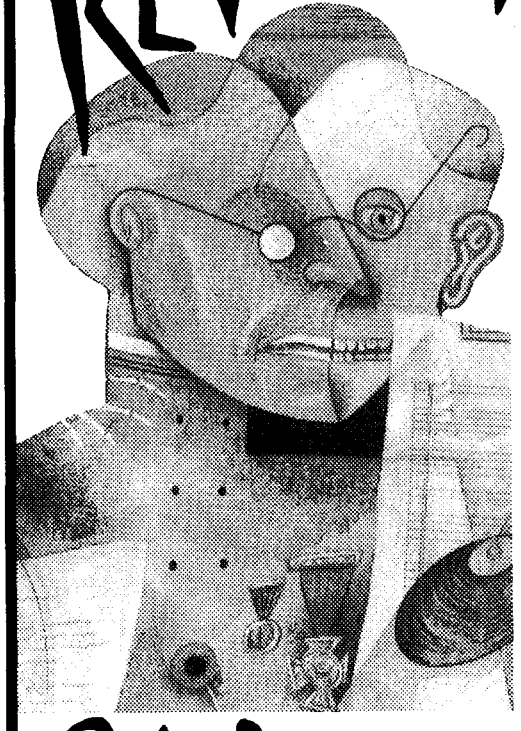
None of this augurs well for an era in which competition will less and less take the form of product "winners" that dominate their fields for a long time, like the American automobile of bygone days, and more and more assume the form of a race for "process" inventions, like those that are continually revolutionizing the computer field. Two elements are apt to lessen America's strength in this new kind of rivalry. The first is that, by virtue of its long-lasting and multifaceted nature, process competition is a team rather than an individual-driven effort. As with an army, says Thurow, it is group spirit, not individual achievement, that will make one company or country better than another. That is not the American style, but it is very much the German and Japanese way. "America and Britain trumpet individualistic values," Thurow writes: "the brilliant entrepreneur, Nobel Prize winners, large wage differentials, individual responsibility for skills, easy to fire and easy to quit, profit maximization, and hostile mergers and takeovers. . . . In contrast, Germany and Japan trumpet communitarian values: business groups, social responsibility for skills, teamwork, firm loyalty. . . . "

Communitarian capitalism, as Thurow calls it—not, I think, the most appropriate term—is especially interested in team-like business organization, in which individual firms are financially interlocked to assure their cooperation and to enhance their collective strengths. The Japanese have *keiretsu*, or networks of customers and suppliers; the Germans arrange coordination among companies by banks that hold shares in the associated companies. Thus, "among the one hundred largest industrial corporations in Germany, the large universal banks own 10 to 25 percent of the shares in 48 of the largest 100 firms, 25 to 50 percent of the shares in 43 others, and over 50 percent of the shares in 9 of the 100 biggest firms."

All this would of course be anathema to American ideals of dog-eat-dog competition, not to mention wildly in violation of our antitrust laws. But in the world of process competition, the business group system—which, not so incidentally, includes a strong place for organized labor—seems to work very well in those nations that practice it, whereas the highly individualist competitive system does not. One very important reason is that the German and Japanese company interlocks allow companies to plan for the long term without risking the kind of takeover free-for-alls that have wreaked such havoc in the American corporate world. As Thurow puts it, "The United States has organized a system that is the exact opposite of that of Germany and Japan. Those countries have organized a system (business groups) to minimize the influence and power of impatient shareholders, while the United States has or-

"A triumph...an unusually complex and compelling novel. It deserves a wide audience." —*Washington Post Book World*

REGENERATION



Pat Barker

Blending fact and fiction, novelist and historian Pat Barker vividly recreates the destruction and despair of WWI Europe, and the fallout caused by a poet's public condemnation of The Great War.

"Pat Barker extends the boundaries of antiwar fiction in her eloquent novel." —*New York Times*

"A remarkable and impressive novel of war and its psychological side effects...A subtle, highly convincing blend of historical fact and imaginative reconstruction." —*The Atlantic*

"Brilliantly harrowing... *Regeneration* tells a part of the whole story of war that is not often told."—*New York Times Book Review*, front page

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ganized a system (fund dominance) to maximize the influence of impatient shareholders."

I leave to the last what is surely the most important difference between American and foreign capitalisms. It is their respective views of the role of government. In Japan and Europe the public and private sectors are conceived as inherently interdependent. The energy that drives economic life may originate in the public as well as in the private sphere, and the guidance and support of private undertakings is willingly conceded to be a useful role for government. A case in point is the Airbus, the first successful competitor to Boeing. The Airbus is financed by England, France, Germany and Spain, although run by private management. A similar public-private aviation venture will soon be launched in Japan. The question will then be whether Boeing, for all the brilliance of its achievement, will be able to hold its own against companies that have two advantages to which it cannot lay claim: access to public financing and the aid and assistance of government as an ex officio adjunct to the company's sales staff.

Such visions of state-private undertakings do not accord with the American tradition today. Is it possible that we could reshape our institutions or our thinking to align ourselves more closely with what appear to be the imperatives of successful performance in the century to come? There is a great temptation to say No. But perhaps we should recall that there was once a different American attitude. It was, after all, the power of government that helped create the intercontinental railroad system, the Panama Canal, the Interstate System of highways, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Rural Electrification Administration, not to mention the military-industrial complex itself.

Lester Thurow's final chapter, which offers "An American Game Plan," is in fact a bet that such a change in attitudes and institutions is possible. None of his specific recommendations will come as much of a surprise after his diagnosis. He urges a range of programs, some familiar, some new: heavy investment in infrastructure and education, including grants to all noncollege students for additional post-high school training; the modification of antitrust laws to legitimate our own business groups; new laws to discourage takeovers and destabilizing stock trading; and above all, a commitment to "industrial policy"—the coordination of public and private sectors to achieve American economic parity in the years ahead. Here he favors industry-led, not government-led, undertakings in promising areas, to which government will lend financial support, but only for a limited period of time. Thus his program fleshes out the changes he sees as necessary to avoid our becoming the China of the twenty-first century. It is a view, and a general program, that I support strongly. Whether it will become a political reality is the most important, and the most unpredictable, issue that will be decided during these years of American decline. □

Return of the Yellow Peril

KARL TARO GREENFELD

RISING SUN. *By Michael Crichton. Knopf. 355 pp. $22.*

IN THE REALM OF A DYING EMPEROR: A Portrait of Japan at Century's End. *By Norma Field. Pantheon. 273 pp. $22.*

THE OUTNATION: A Search for the Soul of Japan. *By Jonathan Rauch. Harvard Business School Press. 180 pp. $18.95.*

Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun*, judging from its enormous sales (first on *The New York Times*'s best-seller list for three weeks and still second as of April 19), could be the only book about Japan many Americans will ever read. If this is true, its portrayal of the Japanese as inscrutable, technologically proficient, predatory aliens who communicate through telepathy, subsist on unpalatable foods, manipulate *everything* and *everyone* and enjoy kinky, violent sex with white women will be more influential in shaping opinions about Japan and the Japanese than any of the more thoughtful and insightful books recently published.

Rising Sun is a thriller revolving around the postcoital murder of Cheryl Austin, a Texas blonde, on a conference table at the Nakamoto Tower in downtown L.A., the U.S. headquarters of the fictitious Nakamoto *keiretsu* (holding company). As detectives Peter Smith and John Connor unravel the mystery, every character they encounter puts in his two yen about Japan-U.S. relations. And each speaks in improbable paragraphs of exposition familiar to readers of revisionist Japan experts Chalmers Johnson, Clyde Prestowitz, James Fallows or Pat Choate.

There has been for some time a demand for perfidious, post-cold war villains, and Crichton's Japanese are the supply.

Karl Taro Greenfeld writes frequently from Tokyo for The Nation.

Crichton has brought to the surface an idea that has been lurking for some years in America's collective pop-culture unconscious: The Japanese are evil. The Japanese have been accused of bearing the responsibility for any or all of the following: unemployment, budget deficits, the declining industrial base, trade imbalances, low savings rates, unfair trading, high real estate prices and, now, low real estate prices. And to all this Crichton adds the final indignity. In *Rising Sun*, Japanese men have sex exclusively with white women, whom they force to live in subjugation in secret locales. ("We demand reciprocity," a Lee Iacocca might insist.) By making the leap into the realm of hysteria—an appropriate cover for the paperback might be a caricature of World War II–era Prime Minister Tojo skulking off into Rockefeller Center with Doris Day over one shoulder and an eighteen-inch dildo sheathed where his samurai sword would have been—Crichton has changed the context in which I, and I suspect others, will perceive what is written about Japan and the Japanese.

Suddenly, revisionist Japan experts like Prestowitz or Johnson, who have been criticized by some as Japan-bashers, seem moderate and reasonable—as George Bush appears reasonable when compared with Pat Buchanan. Prior to *Rising Sun*, those Americans who bothered to think about tensions in Japan-U.S. relations focused on economic matters: opening rice markets, for example, or accusations of semiconductor dumping. At worst, there were the racist insults clumsily blurted out by Japanese politicians who sometimes forget they have become actors on the international media stage. (I suspect some American politicians harbor reciprocal xenophobic views on the Japanese but are far too media-savvy to voice them.)

But Crichton's novel suggests that if the Japanese finally buy up enough of America they will not only have their way with our cultural treasures (Columbia's or MCA's debatable status as treasures notwithstanding), they will also have their

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way with our women—which means, of course, blonde women. The threat sounds familiar—it is a timeworn and chillingly effective cry that rallies white men to string innocent men of color from trees. Savor this quote from *Rising Sun* spoken by Julia Young, a "beautiful" girl with a Southern accent who lives in a *bettaku*, a "love residence" kept by Japanese executives in Westwood, California:

> "These guys come over from Tokyo, and even if they have a *shokai*, an introduction, you still have to be careful. They think nothing of dropping ten or twenty thousand in a night. It's like a tip for them. Leave it on the dresser. But then, what they want to do—at least some of them. . . . their wishes, their desires, it's just as natural as leaving the tip. It's completely natural to them. I mean, I don't mind a little golden shower or whatever, handcuffs, you know. Maybe a little spanking if I like the guy. But I won't let anyone cut me. I don't care how much money. None of those things with knives or swords. . . . A lot of them, they are so polite, so correct, but when they get turned on, they have this . . . this *way*. . . . They're strange people."

The Japanese in *Rising Sun* are portrayed as aliens, as perfidious and threatening as the virus from outer space in Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain*. If African-Americans or Jewish-Americans were portrayed in a similarly negative caricature, there would be storms of protest. Unfortunately, *Rising Sun* received a positive front-page review in *The New York Times Book Review*. Recessionary America's need for a scapegoat has created an atmosphere of fear of Japan. "We are definitely at war with Japan," says fictional character John Connor.

In this climate, thoughtful books about Japan, like *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor*, by Norma Field, or *The Outnation*, by Jonathan Rauch, can be too easily overlooked. Field, an associate professor of East Asian languages and civilizations at the University of Chicago, was born to an American father and Japanese mother in occupied Japan. *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor* is a skillful rendering of her feelings about returning to the land of her birth—a nation that was, in many ways, exclusionary and cruel to outsiders like herself. It is also a tale about three Japanese: a flag burner, a widow and Nagasaki's outspoken Mayor Hitoshi Motoshima, who in their own ways fought the rigid conformity that envelops too much of Japanese life.

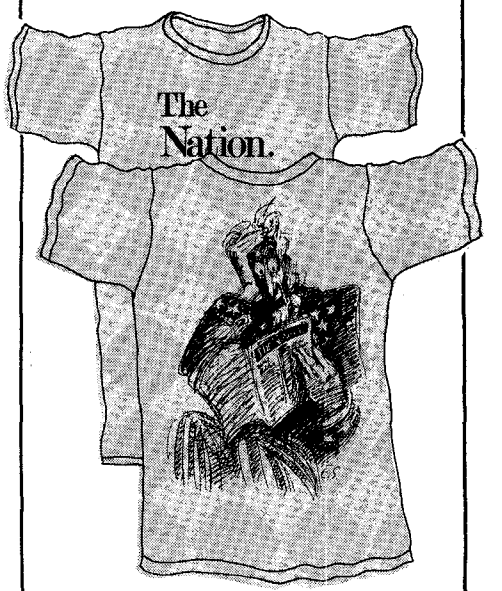
Field's description of flag burner Chibana Shoichi's home of Okinawa, an island still struggling to come to terms with its World War II history as a battle site where 250,000 people died, is vivid and moving. She thought-provokingly juxtaposes scenes of Okinawa's unique status as a formerly independent nation, now "occupied" (small o) by the Japanese while previously having been "Occupied" (big O) by the Americans, with Emperor Hirohito's (the dying emperor of the title) endless blood transfusions and rectal bleeding, and with the posture of "self-restraint" that settled over Japan during his prolonged decline. It was considered bad taste to celebrate lavishly or show exuberant joy during the Emperor's illness. (I was in Japan at the time and recall one curious example of "self-restraint." Mitsukoshi department store found itself in a quandary over its Christmas wrapping paper, which had the unrestrained word "Merry" printed before "Christmas." Disseminating the word "Merry," even in English, would be in very bad taste during a season of self-restraint. The solution was to print new wrapping paper with the more restrained adjective "Holy" preceding "Christmas.")

That Field's book is an intelligent, if critical, look at Japan should come as a relief. But could the Japanese, even in her account, be seen as congenitally creepy? "The sophisticated cynics do not see that they cannot disengage by choice," she writes at one point. "In their submission to an education that robbed them of their childhood, that holds their own children hostage through secret records passed from school to school, reinforcing an ever more tyrannical regimen of competition, in their surrender to a crushing routine of work and commute, they are participants in a compulsory game."

Before reading *Rising Sun* I would not have been struck by a passage like that. Now I must pause. Crichton's sensationalism has made me wary of even legitimate criticism of Japan. Have I become the Anti-Crichton? Now I worry that Americans will detect evidence of Japanese dastardliness in every subtle observation of their differentness—in the way they bow instead of shake hands, in the way they eat raw fish, and so on.

The Outnation is an interesting book of aphorisms gleaned from Jonathan Rauch's six-month stay in Japan. But why, in the course of an otherwise acute and perceptive discussion, does

DON'T CRY UNCLE!



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Rauch feel compelled to explain that the Japanese aren't clones and that "this is immediately evident even if you are unused to looking at Asians and still haven't noticed that the hair comes in infinite fine gradations of blackness: black-black, brown-black, dark brown, even reddish brown." Is Rauch making a valid point? Or has *Rising Sun* made me excessively sensitive?

It seems to me that an honorable writer like Rauch, who clearly wants to understand, should not explain to Americans that the Japanese are not clones. A few years ago I would have said that we had outgrown stereotypes and fear. But the climate has apparently changed, thanks to the likes of Iacocca and now to Crichton.

Rauch eloquently expresses the same sentiment: "There was no dark secret. The Japanese are precisely as mysterious and unique as my aunt in Hackensack. I came to Japan wanting to know how I ought to feel about the place. I left knowing only how not to feel. Frightened: that is how not to feel." □

Past Present

GWYNETH CRAVENS

Since "The Little Mermaid," by Hans Christian Andersen, was first read aloud to me by my mother when I was 4 or 5, I've read it over and over—to myself, to my own daughter and to other children. I always forget that it's a tale. It seems instead an immediate, intimate part of my life, yet suspended outside of time. When I was small, elements of the story troubled me. Growing up in the high desert of the Southwest and never having seen the ocean, I'd have given anything to be a mermaid rather than a girl, and yet the heroine yearned to become a human and live on the land. And what suffering! How could she abide the sensation, once she had legs, that she was walking on knives? But even though her trials seemed intolerable, I felt as though the deepest part of my nature were being addressed by a sincere friend, and I was satisfied and uplifted by the ending without understanding the reason.

Recently I revisited the story in *The Complete Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tales* (edited by Lily Owens, translated from the Danish for the most part by Mrs. H.B. Paull and H. Oskar Sommer in the 1880s and published by Avenel/Crown in 1981). I was struck anew by its richness and power, and by how radical, how subversive, how steely it is in disclosing a definition of love enormously contrary to the one most commonly celebrated. What of its subtleties I could have articulated to myself back then I don't know, but some part of me readily absorbed them. Consciously I only knew that the tale somehow wanted to awaken me to the truth that there was more to my being than I thought, more possibilities than the ones that lay close at hand.

The little mermaid is a quiet, pensive child who dwells in a kingdom so accurately described, with its glowing colors and constant undulations and gliding shadows and billowy magnifications, and the sun like a purple flower with light streaming from its calyx, that you might wonder how a Dane living in the early nineteenth century before the invention of scuba diving was able to conjure up such a scene. She has a sweet singing voice, a curiosity about things human and a sense of not being at home in the element in which her elder sisters are so content. They enjoy collecting the bounty from wrecked vessels; she's pleased to have only a little statue of a handsome boy, a garden she has planted in the shape and color of the sun, and whatever impressions she can gather of the ships, towns and animals above as reported by her sisters and her grandmother. On the day she turns 15 she's allowed to visit the surface, and there she glimpses, on a boat, a prince. So begins her new life. When a storm arises and the ship founders, she rescues him from drowning, kisses his unconscious brow and leaves him on a beach. There a girl finds him, and he believes her to be his savior. The little mermaid continues to watch him longingly from a distance, remembering "that his head had rested on her bosom, and how heartily she had kissed him; but he knew nothing of all this, and could not even dream of her."

She inquires of her grandmother about the ways of mankind and learns that when mermaids die they become sea-foam but that humans, after the body has been turned to dust, have a soul that lives forever. "It rises up through the clear, pure air beyond the glittering stars," says her grandmother. "As we rise out of the water, and behold all the land of the earth, so do they rise to unknown and glorious regions which we shall never see." The little mermaid, recognizing that her death means she will never again perceive the beauty of the world, asks how she can win an immortal soul. She's told that if a man were to love her with such fidelity and wholeheartedness that his soul would flow into her body, a soul of her own would spring into being—but even attraction is impossible, because humans consider fish tails ugly.

To find a way to be with her adored prince and to achieve a soul, the little mermaid visits the sea witch in her whirlpool, braving snakelike half-plant, half-animal monsters who grasp in their clinging arms the skeletons of those who have perished at sea, and even a little mermaid, whom they've caught and strangled. As Andersen is unafraid to show—and as I must also have been aware, because children do sense such things and are always wondering about them—the darkness never stops reaching out its tentacles. "I know what you want," says the sea witch. "It is very stupid of you . . . and it will bring you to sorrow." She prepares a draught—adding a drop of her own black blood—that will turn the mermaid's tail into legs. "All who see you will say that you are the prettiest little human being they ever saw. You will still have the same floating gracefulness of movement, and no dancer will ever tread so lightly; but at every step you take it will feel as if you were treading upon sharp knives, and that the blood must flow." She adds that the mermaid can never again return to her former life, and that if the prince marries another, her heart will break and her life will end. In payment, the sea witch asks for the mermaid's voice and cuts out her tongue—the promise of love is not to be won without sacrifice. At the boundary between water and land, the mermaid drinks the potion and, feeling as if a two-edged sword were passing through her body, swoons. When she awakens, she has become human, and there stands the prince.

Just as Andersen accurately discerns the depths of the sea, he also comprehends something profound about the metamorphosis in consciousness at the boundary between girlhood and womanhood and about the hardships of that initiation: the dramatic transformation of the body, accompanied by blood and the two-edged blade of desire and pain; the irrevocable exchange of ease and freedom

Gwyneth Cravens's latest novel is The Gates of Paradise *(Ticknor & Fields). She edits "Past Present," an occasional column.*

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for the gravity and responsibilities of maturity; the solitary nature of the quest for a new sensibility and the will necessary to accomplish it; and the silence that surrounds these mysteries.

The heroine can ask for nothing; she can only hope, communing with her beloved through her expressive eyes and her enchanting—though secretly excruciating—dance. The prince, seeing a resemblance to the girl who apparently saved his life, lets his "dumb foundling" sleep on a cushion outside his room and shows her the delights of his kingdom. His parents want him to marry, but he's reluctant; if he were forced, he tells her, he'd choose her as his bride, and he "laid his head on her heart, while she dreamed of human happiness and an immortal soul." Nevertheless, it happens that he becomes betrothed to the young woman he thinks rescued him. Our assumptions and conventions can blind us to the miraculous at our door. "She is the only one in the world I could love," he tells the little mermaid. "My fondest hopes are all fulfilled. You will rejoice at my happiness; for your devotion to me is great and sincere." The mute creature can do nothing but kiss his hand.

At his wedding, aboard a ship, she carries the bridal train, thinking of all she has lost, and joins in the dancing. "She knew this was the last evening she should ever see the prince, for whom she had forsaken her kindred and her home," Andersen writes. "She had given up her beautiful voice, and suffered unheard-of pain daily for him, while he knew nothing of it." And we begin to sense that it's best that the prince remain ignorant; the goal of love is not to invoke guilt and obligation.

After the couple retire for the night, the sisters of the little mermaid rise up from the swells with a knife. The sea witch, they say, has agreed to return to the little mermaid her tail and her undersea life if she will only kill the prince, and they plead with her to do it. Such is the sort of grim advice that we often receive when our fate becomes unbearable. And what disappointed lover has not cherished the impulse to turn on the person who has been everything to him or to her? With a stroke, say the inner and outer voices, you can destroy the presence of the beloved and regain your freedom, and all will be as it was before you met. The little mermaid accepts the knife. Toward morning, she goes to the dreaming prince, but upon hearing him whisper the name of his bride, she flings the knife into the water and throws herself overboard, dissolving into foam on the crest of a wave.

But this is a story suffused with light. The little mermaid has passed the crucial test: She has turned away from the temptations of darkness. Now, in the bright dawn, she finds herself rising upward surrounded by beautiful, transparent beings. Because of the purity of her endeavor, she has been turned into one of the daughters of the air, who travel about the world making helpful breezes blow. "A mermaid has not an immortal soul, nor can she obtain one unless she wins the love of a human being," they tell her. "On the power of another hangs her eternal destiny. But the daughters of the air, although they do not possess an immortal soul, can, by their good deeds, procure one for themselves." The mermaid, lifting her eyes to the sun, feels them filling with her first tears. Invisible, she kisses the forehead of the bride, fans the prince and then mounts up into the sky with her companions.

The Disney movie by the same name, no doubt seen, if not memorized, by virtually every little girl in the United States since it came out a few years ago—it's one of the most successful Disney movies ever made, and it's been one of the top ten best-selling videos for over seventy weeks—has a different finale and a different agenda. If you don't know the original, or if you can expunge it from your brain, then the movie might be entertaining in the way that Las Vegas shows are. All of the sorcery of animation has been put into the service of the banal. Steel has been replaced by cotton candy. Force and magical gratification triumph. The virtues of patience and endurance are given scarcely a nod—the cute, determined heroine has three mostly fun-filled days to catch her prince. Her trials are superficial and over quickly, and she's helped along by friendly marine life. She's not interested in acquiring a soul but rather in collecting things—she has a vast cave crammed with loot from sunken ships. The "soul" comes up only in a tune about how other mermaids have sold theirs in a Faustian pact with the sea witch, who resembles the female impersonator Divine and who masquerades as the little mermaid, nearly tricking the prince into marriage as a part of her plot to rule the ocean. In a violent denouement, the witch is killed, leaving the prince free to wed the little mermaid. Now painlessly human and dressed in a

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snazzy outfit, she's handed over to him by her father. The screen fills with the nuptial kiss. This is how adults who know how to make money believe children should be nourished. Children, apparently happy on a diet of sugar, agree; according to my local bookseller, they now want only the Disney version, which, with its copyrighted artwork, toys and other spinoffs, threatens to crowd the original off the shelves, as has already happened, for instance, to "Pinocchio."

But I believe that Andersen's story, so full of sadness and loveliness and redemption, so subdued in its splendor, like the glimmer of the sun in the ocean depths, will survive, at least for those children—and adults—who want an experience of substance. (There's a great deal more to the story than I've mentioned here.) Unlike the ending to the movie and the conclusions we learn to expect in fairy tales and in life, the little mermaid never gains the love of the prince, who remains content with counterfeit and ever oblivious to his silent friend's remarkable origins and her role as his rescuer (just as we can be to the extraordinary side of our being and its quiet help). And her fulfillment doesn't come through marriage. Rather than simply passing from the domain of her father to that of a husband, she attains an independent destiny, and her reward is her continuing capacity to give love whether or not she receives it. And that love grows beyond the particular. She even bestows affection on the bride: Real love has no rivals. Dissatisfied on the bottom of the sea and drawn toward the illumination of the upper realm by the strength of her sentiment for a man, she has, through her own efforts, now gone beyond mundane life and reached the sky, and may even arrive at something much greater that lies beyond the stars. □

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THEATER.

THOMAS M. DISCH

'Tis Pity She's a Whore
Amadis
Death and the Maiden
Jake's Women
Conversations With My Father

I don't remember seeing anything at the Public Theater so impressive as its current production of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, directed by the theater's new head, JoAnne Akalaitis. John Ford's revenge tragedy, published in 1633, is a work of gonzo grandeur and anticipates the theories of Artaud by a good three centuries. The horrors that drench the final curtain are of such a magnitude and so subject to tipping over into silliness or triggering protective giggles that one false note could be fatal. The directorial difficulty is compounded by the text's uncommonly multivalent portraits of several central characters and its constant oscillation between sublime horror and blackest comedy. Akalaitis's solutions to the problems that Ford has posed are so inspired that the result seems nothing short of a collaboration.

Val Kilmer as the incestuous, mass-murdering romantic lead, Giovanni, manages to maintain a star presence without seeming ever to raise his voice, while all about him the rest of the cast are being whipped to frenzy, prior to their slaughter. The acting honors include virtually the entire cast: Jeanne Tripplehorn in the title role justifies all her brother's love-sick praises; Deirdre O'Connell as her lascivious duenna, Putana, and Ellen McElduff as a perfect Blonde Venus–style vamp are both as stylized and vividly present as Art Deco skyscrapers; and the same may be said of Ross Lehman's Bertie-Woosterish cavortings as the comic suitor Bergetto, Mark Kenneth Smaltz as his manservant Poggio, Erick Avari as the Machiavellian valet Vasques and Jared Harris as his cuckolded master Soranzo. Any one of their performances would be sufficient reason in itself to catch the show.

Akalaitis's unseen collaborators perform commensurate wonders, particularly choreographer Timothy O'Slynne and fight director David Leong, both of whom demand of the cast feats of Olympic physicality and energy. The music by Jan A. P. Kaczmarek propels or underlines the action like a well-engineered Hollywood soundtrack (though it doesn't serve quite so well as an overture), and the eclectically surrealist sets by John Conklin (a dab of Dali, a tang of Tanguy, a dash of Man Ray), while not in themselves breathtaking, do serve to convey Akalaitis's vision of a fantastical futurist Italy of the twenties, a dystopia not unlike that imagined by John Ford and his contemporaries, for whom "Italy" was shorthand for all forms of corruption: political, religious and sexual, a tabloid wonderland where any wickedness was possible. The other "Italy" that might satisfy Ford's dramatic requirements is New York's own Little Italy (which served quite well as a venue for a recent *Rigoletto*), with its godfathers, imaginative murderers and *de rigueur* catered weddings, and indeed, Akalaitis's version can't help but evoke this parallel at times. The high point of the production is the opening of the wedding scene, as the entire cast, with various pasteboard masks on sticks, advances toward the footlights like a troop of zombies intermittently contorting, spasmodically, to express their hidden, demonic natures. The final slaughter was equally breathtaking, but one can expect that of final slaughters.

That is as good a lead-in as any to note that I did not stick around for my favorite final slaughter in the *Hamlet* being done at the Roundabout, even though it meant missing the drollery of hearing Stephen Lang deliver Hamlet's advice to the players, words that the entire cast must have shuddered to hear at each performance. With the current plethora of openings it isn't worth wasting precious column inches. Likewise, I will pass over *Five Guys Named Moe*, a minstrel show imported from London, where minstrel shows are still a tenable art form. My companion at the theater for Act I of *Moe* summed up the experience quite well when he said that though he'd seen musicals that were worse, he'd never seen one more objectionable. It's sexist, racist and homophobic, and on top of that the music, by the justly neglected Louis Jordan, is standard-issue Tin Pan Alley fluff and cumulatively very boring. Why does God allow such things, you might wonder. As a litmus test—for its very flaws may make it a hit, and then, as when encountering a dreadful painting hanging in someone's living room, when people gush about what *fun* it was, you'll know to be wary.

Instead of taxing luckless performers

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for their involvement in such misguided efforts, let me wax enthusiastic for the American premiere production by the Measured Breaths Theater Company of Jean-Baptiste Lully's opera of 1684, *Amadis*. It played only three weekends at the Gene Frankel Theater on Bond Street just off the Bowery, so this review can only be commemorative, not advisory, but this was one of those bolt-from-the-blue astonishments that make up for all the other fizzled first nights, a performance that made Lully, Louis XIV's favorite composer, seem as lively, droll and sheerly performable as Gilbert and Sullivan.

A lion's share of the credit for this work of resurrection must go to director/choreographer Robert Press, a sometime protégé of Peter Sellars, from whose modern-dress versions of the Mozart-Da Ponte operas Press has extracted a modus operandi that has a similar effect of revivifying without vulgarizing. As with Akalaitis's Mussolini-era *Whore* (a play nearly contemporary with *Amadis*), the updating's first and primary benefit may be to the performers, since it gives them an already mapped typological repertory of gestures and poses with which to inflect their performances. Press has transposed *Amadis* from the gilded purlieus of Opera Seria Land to the Old West and has re-choreographed Lully's lilting dance intermezzos accordingly, making the singers perform (for instance) hoedowns that are also stylized renderings of a traditional gun duel. There is also, overlaid on this, a supernatural element involving the interfering sorcerers, Urgande and Alquif (sung with wit and brio by Wendy Jorissen and Jeffrey Stackhouse), that has the effect of making Lully and his librettist, Philippe Quinault, seem as fashionably self-referential and po-mo as Italo Calvino. Press also takes credit for the English translation of Quinault's libretto, and mostly deserves credit, too, though I did think he relied too much on the single appellative "you *beech*."

Vocally and dramatically, the cast made one realize how often one tolerates a style of delivery that is unfelt and unformulated at larger opera houses. The most notable performances in *Amadis* were those by Louis Meagley, as Arcalaus, a very Jack Palance of cowpoke villainy, and Laurence Frommer and Kevin D. Mayes as "a Chorus of Evil Roughneck Demons." Though the ladies didn't have as many opportunities for western-style camping, both Jill Anne Edwards and Olivia Charles sang delectably. Louis XIV would surely have been amused,

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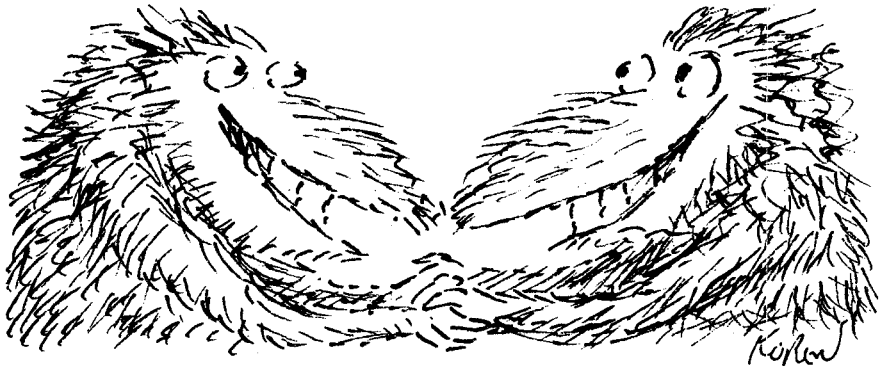

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and even, in the apotheosis that takes up all of Act V, ravished.

Earlier productions that Press has directed for the Measured Breaths company have included works by Weill, Handel and Monteverdi. I'd advise enthusiasts of renegade opera to check them out at the next opportunity; to find out when that is, ask to be put on their mailing list by phoning them at (212) 334-8402.

From the sublime to the innocuous. Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden* is a thriller for those who don't like thrillers. People who do will be apt to find it tame, predictable and preachy. It could survive a while anyhow, at least as long as the present cast of three—Glenn Close, Gene Hackman and Richard Dreyfuss—continue to exert their drawing power as Hollywood stars made flesh on Broadway, but caveat emptor.

The plot is all too simple: In a generic country the program identifies as "probably Chile," Dreyfuss brings home a Good Samaritan who's helped him survive a flat tire, whereupon Dreyfuss's wife, Glenn Close, recognizes him as the doctor who assisted as she was tortured and raped at the height of (probably) Pinochet's terror. She knocks him out, ties him up and enlists her husband's reluctant assistance in forcing a confession from him. Hackman cooperates, all the while insisting he is innocent and his confession spurious. Close (and the audience) is convinced he really is guilty, and she comes *this close* to killing him, but in a final tableau, in evening clothes (to testify to the upscale character of the evening's thrills), we see that she's elected to preserve the status quo and just look daggers at her torturer in the interests of a new era of unforgiving and unforgetting reconciliation.

Dorfman neither engages one's emotions nor thinks through the situation with any rigor. His characters are as generic and hollow as the big cathedral-ceiling set by Tony Walton. They have no agendas, interests or quirks but those dictated by the plot. During all the time they interrogate Hackman it never occurs to either Close or Dreyfuss to demand to know the identities of her other torturers, information that ought to be, according to the play's premise, incredibly valuable—to the degree, indeed, that *they* might be tempted to become torturers to obtain it. But that would lead to melodrama and a general lack of gentility. Mike Nichols directed, but can't very much be blamed for the result, nor yet can the cast, who do no more and no less than Hollywood stars usually do—play themselves, for lack of any better-defined roles.

Jake's Women, Neil Simon's new play at the Neil Simon Theatre, is quite as self-reflexive as its venue might suggest, being an account of all the women involved in the life of a really lovable writer (played by Alan Alda, not Neil Simon; this is an imperfect world), some of whom are real while others are the writer's imaginings of them. To bring this off, there should be a clear (or at least interesting) difference between the women in the play whom Simon imagines as real and those he imagines as the fruits of Jake's imagining. But there's not. The women imagined by Jake are pretty much as bright and sassy and apt to come up with good one-liners as the women imagined by Simon, which rather subverts the wholegrain wholesomeness of the play's moral, that Jake must put by his phantasms and really Give Himself to his Significant Others. My impression is that Simon, or Alda, would be just as happy at his computer monitor writing his pleasant plays as dealing with ordinary people (who can be much more of a nuisance than his plays usually allow to be the case). And that's jake with me, since I almost always enjoy his plays and movies, except for the really piffling ones like *California Suite*. *Jake's Women* is mid-range Simon, and the production is directed by Gene Saks with his usual professionalism. Santo Loquasto has cleverly coordinated sets and costumes to reflect the theme of the play, so that all the tractable, fantasied women of Act I are color-keyed to the smoky coral of the back wall of the set, like flowers sprung from that tabula rasa.

Of the various lovely women beloved and imagined by AldaSimon, the loveliest or funniest were: Helen Shaver as his present wife; Kate Burton as an earlier, deceased wife whose memory haunts him; Brenda Vaccaro as his abrasive sister; and Genia Michaela and Tracy Pollan as his daughter at the ages of 12 and 21, respectively. Alda himself is as nice as can be.

THE RULE OF BERRIES

for Wendy

The honey-feast of the berries has stunned them;
they believe in heaven.

—Plath

The stream sided with berries
(pick them for the clabbered cream)
running with berry juice, stream juice
and the quick eyes of blackbirds
—I am tilted
perilous off the bank,
hand threading branches,
my old blood sister holding hard
the other hand for ballast
(as when we whirled together
hand to hand as children)
bush after bush, water-
and light-fed and later
pail full, the stream
passing into bog, its other work,
we go home to the rule
of berries—jam, cobbler, pie.
Remember? Rosemary roasting on the lamb that night,
what it meant to be together there
far out over the stream as we dared lean
trusting the other's hand
years after we'd grown cautious,
separate—
to hear it still—spill of
berries in the bucket, girlish shrieks
of wet feet, our hands
lovely and stained again.

Deborah Tall

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Jake's Women offers good product to any couple celebrating ten or more years of marriage with a joint income of at least $50,000. Those younger or less affluent would have their tolerance for middlebrow, middle-class, middle-age culture put to a test.

Herb Gardner, whose new comedy, *Conversations With My Father*, has opened at the Royale Theatre, is another playwright Broadway relies on for good product, though not with the cherry-blossom regularity of Neil Simon, this being only his fourth smash hit since *A Thousand Clowns* of thirty years ago. Like that play, which was a fictional paraphrase of Gardner's real-life decision to exit his early, easy success as a cartoonist, *Conversations* is modeled on the author's own experience growing up as the son of the owner of a bar on Canal and Lafayette in lower Manhattan. Gardner strikes just the right balance between loving and rueful, sweet and bitter, for another boffola box-office hit in the tradition of such other memoirs of powerful, oddball parents as *I Remember Mama* or *Life With Father*, and it is surely destined for a long post-Broadway existence in regional theaters and summer stock. There will be a movie, and a musical, and a movie version of the musical, and some of my readers will probably see their grandchildren in the roles played in this production by Jason Biggs and David Krumholtz (who take two cakes as this season's best child actors). It's that kind of play.

But there is one compelling reason not to wait twenty years until *Conversations* reaches your local high school, and that is Judd Hirsch's performance in the title role. As Eddie Ross, né Itzik Goldberg, Hirsch has been written the role of a lifetime, one that distills and focuses the familiar facets of a persona that is already a national archetype thanks to the TV sitcom *Taxi*. Here are the familiar contradictions of gruff and loving, acerbic and kindly, Old World and streetwise in a new recipe that may be, theatrically, the mixture as before but that is as perennially delicious as the mulligan stew cooked up every day by Eddie's wife, Gusta, and enjoyed, under a variety of names, by generations of satisfied customers at Eddie's similarly name-shifting bar.

The plot is carefully crafted to seem no more than the stuff of small talk and memorial services, compounded from revealing anecdotes of daily life, prime wisecracks and the predictable triumphs and tragedies of those two macho arenas open to all challengers, sports and war. Like other tales of the melting pot, assimilation is much at issue, and since the Ross/Goldberg family is Jewish during (mostly) the thirties and forties, the too-easily-assimilated Eddie must confront the many faces of anti-Semitism, from an attempted shakedown by an Italian bootlegger (done to a turn by John Procaccino) to all that World History can dump on him.

Tony Shalhoub, as the adult version of Eddie's son Charlie, must act most of the time as a master of ceremonies and Yiddish interpreter, which garners him lots of laughs but few Big Moments. David Margulies as a Yiddish actor lodging in Eddie's home has a role that is likewise heavy on commentary and wisecracks. All the real heavy-duty acting is up to Judd Hirsch, and he does that rare thing—creates a new ethnic archetype, a New York Jew of the new era who has loosed all ties to the old world of the *shtetl* and synagogue but remains, for all that, Jewish down to his neurons and dendrites, still quarreling with the Creator in the great tradition of Abraham, Job and Tevye. *Mazel tov.* □

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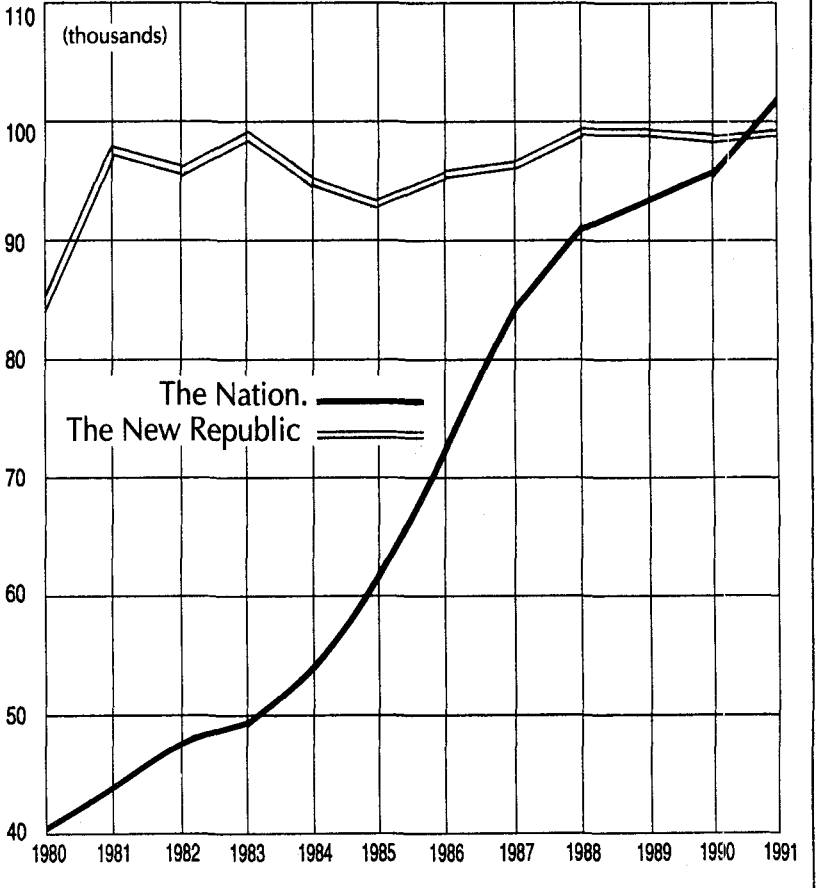

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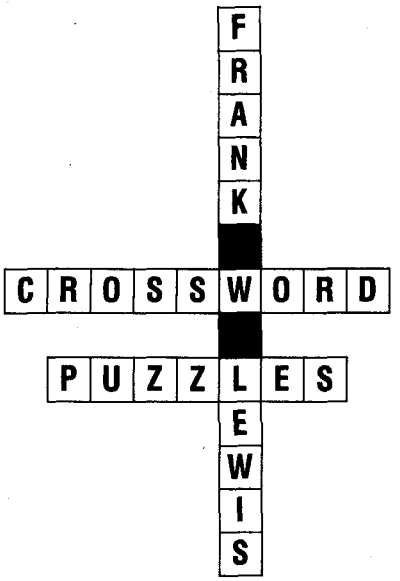

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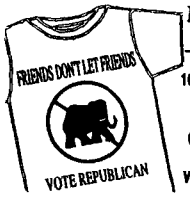

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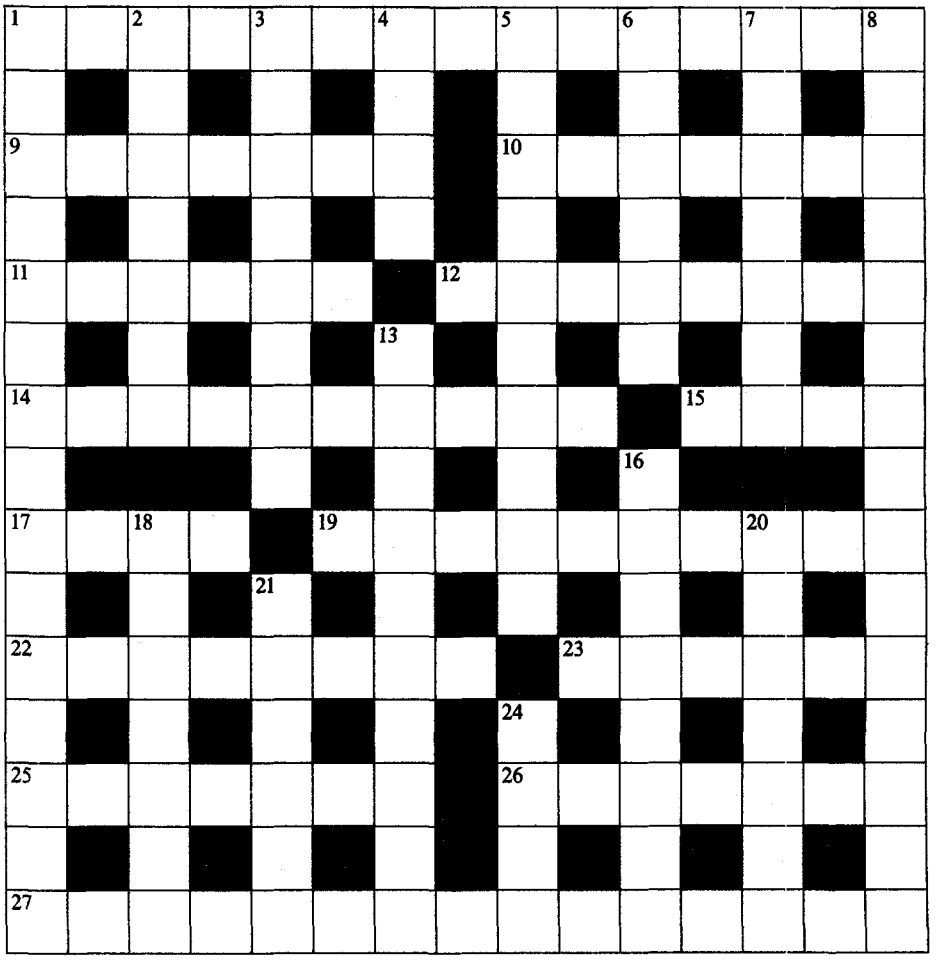
T	U	F	T	S	■	P	I	C	K	A	B	A	C	K
H	■	R	■	K	■	U	■	A	■	L	■	B	■	N
E	L	E	M	E	N	T	A	L	■	L	E	A	V	E
O	■	N	■	W	■	S	■	C	■	U	■	T	■	A
R	I	C	H	E	L	I	E	U	■	V	O	T	E	D
Y	■	H	■	R	■	N	■	L	■	I	■	O	■	I
■	■	■	■	■	P	A	N	A	M	A	N	I	A	N
S	■	F	■	M	■	G	■	T	■	L	■	R	■	G
C	A	R	C	I	N	O	G	E	N	■	■	■	■	■
I	■	E	■	S	■	O	■	D	■	E	■	S	■	C
E	P	S	O	M	■	D	A	R	E	D	E	V	I	L
N	■	H	■	A	■	W	■	I	■	W	■	E	■	O
C	O	M	E	T	■	O	B	S	T	A	C	L	E	S
E	■	A	■	C	■	R	■	K	■	R	■	T	■	E
S	U	N	S	H	A	D	E	S	■	D	R	E	A	D

Crossword Puzzle No. 2382

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 What certain TV preachers seemed to want to make with a flower? (4-2-3-6)
9 Sounds the same moony sort, in him without me, in a different case. (7)
10 When Wayne used to greet one, it wasn't the type early Indians encountered. Part of the mouth gets turned in an unpleasant way . . . (7)
11 . . . with what are superior to mouths having one inside, which may be frightening. (6)
12 Bush vegetable, not little brother getting a couple of bills on the oil strike. (8)
14 More than 500 means of water transportation may prove financially embarrassing. (10)
15 and 17 One makes no progress with such an order when grades are evaluated. (4,4)
19 Is done a lot, however poorly! What dreariness! (10)
22 Deed no longer done such as demanding tribute. (8)
23 Ah! What a silly one comes back to it! (And with a form of vegetable sponge!) (6)
25 One who expresses strong preference for being more fat! (7)
26 One's policy might be to cover you. (7)
27 Certainly not a new account as you might have to mention to the teller. (3,4,3,5)

DOWN

1 Evidently Carson is in trouble, as a quick description. (6-2-3-4)
2 What may be used on the farm to show up around the crib, perhaps. (7)
3 Sly remarks about the small hotel by the sound of it, you "done wrong" here. (8)
4 If I have such a book, it belongs this way. (4)
5 Paradoxically, breathing is the same as death. (10)
6 Cut off the hair? (Rather open, really.) (6)
7 For each climbing record, a climber might be green on one. (7)
8 Jefferson, Nixon and Truman typical of the so-called common man. (3,4,3,5)
13 Not a series of classes on various ethnic groups better here, hoping to make money. (4,6)
16 A frightening sound in certain legal affairs, they're the last things you might expect to find on track. (8)
18 In one case I have a certain time for the tune. (Give me a sure sign!) (7)
20 Not exactly fine, nor is it a real hot spot! (7)
21 More writing is the answer! (6)
24 Laid up to make a call, as some say. (4)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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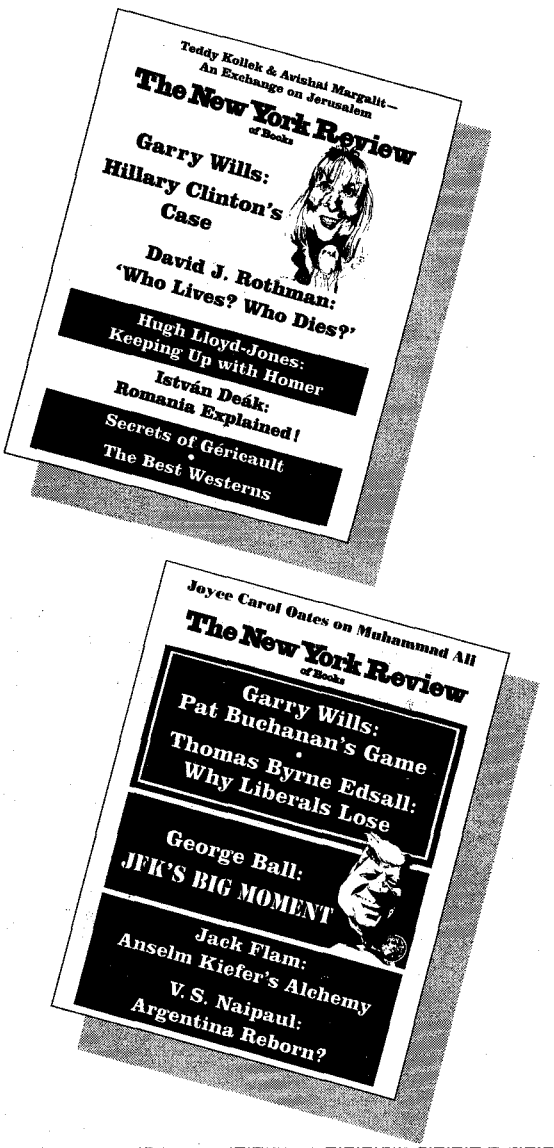

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